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"Forbidden."

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"LED ON," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLIII. (*continued.*)

As he passed Hugh Pemberton's lodgings later in the afternoon, he was annoyed to see Lady Malvern's carriage at the door, for he disapproved of any attention being paid to "such a cad," even when the woman who paid it was over seventy. At his club he threw down a Society paper in disgust because his eye fell on a paragraph concerning the popular dragoon, whose door-step was besieged by beauty and fashion with offerings of hot-house fruit and exotics.

It was sickening to think that his own wife was probably amongst the number, and that the invalid was feeding on the famous grapes from the Grange. This thought irritated him to such an absurd degree that he determined to issue an edict as soon as he reached home, that none of them should be sent out of the house in the future. He knew that this would hit his wife's long list of sick pensioners much harder than it would Hugh, who could empty the stalls of Covent Garden if he chose; but he troubled his mind about nobody else so long as he gratified his own petty spite.

He came home about seven to dress for dinner, as he was engaged to dine at a club much affected by some of the members of the Pelican. As he came out of his dressing-room it occurred to him that he would like to have a look at his boy, just to assure himself that he was all right. He went up the stairs meeting no one on his way. The house seemed appallingly silent. When he came to the door of the nursery, he threw it wide open expecting to find the nurse oblivious of her duties and wrapped in the delights of penny

fiction, but the room was empty. He walked through it quickly, striding over a broken engine and a whole farm-yard of painted cows and pigs as he went, but as he pushed open the door of the sleeping-nursery, and his eyes fixed themselves on the small crib with its pretty bows and laces—the little nest was empty—the bird had flown.

For an instant he stood stock still looking round the daintily furnished room. Pickles not there! What infernal trick were they playing him? The next moment he rang a peal on the bell, which was answered by a terrified under-nurse. To his fierce inquiries she could only answer gaspingly, for she was nearly frightened out of all her powers of speech, that Lord Clifford and Mrs. Whiffin had gone out driving with her ladyship early in the afternoon.

"Early in the afternoon, and it was now between seven and eight," looking at his watch. "Are they all mad—keeping a child out in the cold at this time of night? Where have they gone? Tell me at once."

But the girl could not tell him, and when he sent for the coachman he was out with the carriage, and Simmons only knew that her ladyship had gone off in a hurry, taking Miss Vivian and his little lordship with her. All the time he was asking his quick questions and waiting for slow responses, a storm was raging in his mind. The sight of that empty crib had given him a shock that he could not get over at once.

Could his wife have run away and taken the boy with her?

This horribly unpleasant thought recurred every now and then. He had exasperated her last Sunday, and he was sure that she would only be too thankful to get the child away from his influence. She would teach him to hate his father, to look upon him as a monster of wickedness; and when he found them, as of course he would after a short interval, the boy would shrink from him, and probably howl if he touched him.

He growled a curse between his teeth, as he thought of it; but the next moment he told himself that he was a fool to imagine that Beatrice would leave a luxurious home, and all the prestige of her present position for any consideration on earth. She would be here in a minute or two—women had no idea of time.

That tiresome old hag in Queen Anne's Gate was keeping them just on purpose to bother him. He stood on the rug in the smoking

room dressed ready to go out, with a fur-lined coat thrown over his evening things, the impersonation of impotent impatience. Every other minute he pulled out his watch, or went out into the hall, anxiety and rage keeping pace with each other. Slowly and deliberately the old fashioned clock in the hall struck eight. There was a sound of wheels—the clatter of horses' hoofs. Before the knocker could be touched the door was thrown open.

Falconer waited silent and sullen in the shadow of a curtain. The light of the hall lamp fell on Beatrice's face, pale but peaceful, as she stepped out first; next came a little bundle wrapped in a white shawl which Simmons placed carefully on the door-mat. Without waiting for Flora and the nurse who followed, Beatrice held out her hand to the much be-wrapped small being. "Come along, little man," she said cheerfully and turned towards the private staircase.

The next moment her husband stepped between her and her only means of escape, with sullen passion written on every line of his face. "What the devil do you mean by being out at such an hour?" he asked fiercely, his anger having risen to fever heat through tedious repression.

She raised her head, and looked at him coldly. "We have been to St. Christophers, and we have missed our train. Nurse, please take Lord Clifford upstairs."

He caught the child in his arms and held him tight. Tired and over excited, Pickles struggled and kicked, giving vent to piercing cries, which irritated his father still further. Over his little son's restless head, Falconer stormed at his wife, first for going to see her father, secondly for keeping the boy out so late, and so doing her best to kill him.

Then he turned on Mrs. Whiffin, the fat phlegmatic nurse—who was the only person in the house who never cared a rap for what her master said—and told her that if she ventured to take the boy by train without first asking his permission she should be packed off without a character, whilst Flora, who never heard such language before in the whole course of her carefully guarded existence, leant against the wall in a shiver of disgust, and Pickles kept up a continued howl of fright and fractiousness. Exasperated beyond all thought of control, Falconer thumped him down in a hurry on the first step of the stairs, with a rough "Shut up, you little devil."

This was treatment to which the child was quite unaccustomed.

He subsided into a disconsolate heap, his small face hidden on the hard stair carpet, his little chest heaving with heart-breaking sobs. If the end of the world had come at that moment, it could scarcely have startled him more than his father's fierce tone as he spoke to him.

"My darling, my own little pet!" Beatrice was down on her knees beside him in a moment, her heart throbbing so wildly with indignation that it seemed as if it must break from its bonds. "Come to your mother, my own!"

As she lifted him up, he clung to her neck with all his might, partly for protection as well as in eager love, and nestled his head on her shoulder, his bright curls resting against her soft dark furs.

Falconer looked darkly at the mother and son, with some idea of tearing the child away. It was his own fault that those tiny arms were not clasped round his own neck, instead of hers, but that did not make it easier to bear. She was unconquered, unsubdued, and he knew it. His anger only raised her high spirit to a state of proud defiance such as any rebel easily reaches who is ready to die for his cause. He watched her, his blood boiling within his veins—as she stood up, still with the boy's face resting on her shoulder, and without one backward look went slowly up the stairs, with a prouder, loftier bearing than he could ever show—the injured wife and her insulted child.

As he hesitated what to do next, he met Flo's blue eyes fixed upon him in astonished disgust. That look turned the scale. As a slight alleviation to his feelings, he muttered under his breath.

"I'll teach her who is master, d—— me if I don't" and signing to Simmons to open the front door, walked out into the foggy night, and stepped into the brougham which had been waiting some time.

As the heavy door closed behind him, Flora drew a deep breath of intense relief.

CHAPTER XLIV.

NOTHING TO BE DONE.

"SHE'LL never be satisfied till she has made the little kid hate me like poison, and there's no cure for it," Lord Falconer reflected as he lighted a cigar. "I can't be always staying at home like a dog on the watch. Never was a fellow so bothered as I am. Can't slip away to the States without feeling that everybody is up to mischief behind my back."

He arrived at the club in a state of angry self-pity, regarding himself as the victim of untoward circumstances. He had upset everybody at home, destroyed his wife's appetite, but increased his own, and had come out to spend an evening after his own heart with a set of his favourite pals. And yet, as he went up the modest steps of that retired club, he looked upon himself as an injured man!

Everything depends on the point of view. If a convict only remembered that he was lodged and fed free of expense at the hands of a paternal government, and forgot everything else, he might learn to look upon himself as a highly favoured individual. There was Hugh Pemberton fretting his heart out because he had to stay at home in utter idleness, by a comfortable fireside with nothing to do but to read a little, see a few friends, and feed on gastronomic delicacies. The policeman outside in the fog with a long night duty before him, would have looked upon the dragoon's as a positively pampered existence; and yet the latter was in a state of irritated dissatisfaction. He was thirsting for news of Lady Falconer.

She sent him kind messages, bunches of violets from Covent Garden, basins of some peculiarly nourishing soup which her own cook could make so much better than his, grapes from the Grange—those grapes which were so soon to be forbidden—but what he wanted was to look at her face—to hear her fresh sweet voice, to know what she was thinking, and doing, and suffering. He was in a state of fevered unrest—and his doctor told him that all he needed for perfect recovery was a tranquil mind!

James Pemberton took up his abode under the same roof, and watched over his nephew with quite a fatherly care. Having been told that the patient was on no account to be excited, he thought he was acting up to his instructions by never making the smallest

allusion to that interesting household in Curzon Street. He perfectly exasperated Hugh by his way of "drying up," as it were, whenever the subject was approached. He would be talking in his pleasant genial way about some amusing case in the Law Courts, but if Hugh hazarded a question as to whether Lord Falconer had returned to town or not, he became as uninteresting as possible. Bare facts could be dragged out of him by direct questions, but the details for which Hugh was hankering were bottled up tight, with a large seal on the cork.

All the while Hugh had an instinctive feeling that events were working towards a crisis. There was no rest for his mind, for he felt by that subtle sympathy, which neither scientist nor moralist can either explain—or explain away—that Beatrice was passing through a stage of wearing experience when woman's endurance might fail. Whilst he was sitting there idle and useless, she might be wanting him more than ever before. Thinking of it only brought back the pain in his head, and yet how could he help it, day and night—night and day—sleeping or waking? It was not possible to put her out of his mind. She came before him in the midst of a political discussion with his uncle, or when a brother-officer was giving him the details of a regimental drag-hunt.

Townshend-Rivers was away, Val Forrester was working harder than usual for a second examination, because he felt that Flora Vivian might be the reward of his success; so he learnt nothing from them. James Pemberton came in one day and said he had been with the Bishop.

"The Bishop!" exclaimed Hugh in surprise. "I thought he was tied hand and foot by confirmations and ordinations."

"So he is, but he is a father besides a Bishop, and he must not forget his daughter for the sake of his candidates, or vice versa."

"Something has happened!" breathlessly, as a quiver ran through his weakened frame. His uncle's flow dried up at once.

"You needn't excite yourself. Falconer has been behaving rather more flagrantly than usual, that is all. But if you can't catch a man it is difficult to crush him."

"Do you mean that he refused to see him?"

"Practically."

"And they never met?"

"Never, but Ned wrote him a letter which was a stinger, and old Lady Malvern has cut him—forbidden him her house."

"And they have left that poor girl at his mercy?" the little colour that there was in his face fading as he felt sick with anxiety.

"Yes, my dear boy, she's his wife," drily.

"And because she is his wife, that brute is to be allowed to kill her?" grasping the arms of his chair with his thin hands as he sat up, and stared into his uncle's face with miserable eyes.

"People don't die of misery. They live through it, and grow callous. Falconer has never hidden his vices under a bushel. He has bragged of his sins as some men would like to boast of their virtues, if they had any."

"Why did she ever marry him?" with a groan of intense regret.

"Ah, why indeed?" his chin dropping. "They wouldn't listen to me. I've always thought Edward Kennard very much to blame."

"Uncle Jim, couldn't you do something?"

"Not I. If a girl will jump into a hole, and then turn up her nose at the only means of getting out, I wash my hands of her." He got up from his seat as he spoke, and said he must look in at the club to hear if there were any news. As he walked down Piccadilly, he was angry with himself for having mentioned the name of Falconer; but the fact was that he was absolutely bursting with the subject when he came in, full of tenderest pity for the girl whom he had known from her babyhood, and equally full of vexation with her father, although he agreed with his principles in the depths of his heart, when his feelings left his judgment unbiassed. And yet, any one of his friends would have said that James Pemberton was the last man in the world to be governed by his feelings.

By the time that he reached the top of St. James's Street, he cooled down as he remembered that a divorce would not be granted unless there were proof of cruelty as well as of immorality. At present, the Earl, although he had outraged his wife's feelings in every other way, had not gone so far as even to lay a rough hand on her shoulder; and until he did it, it was no use to quarrel with the Bishop because he would not let his daughter sue for what she could not get.

Everyone was talking about Falconer at the club in low voices, button-holing each other in quiet corners to repeat the last enormity, and everybody agreed that if he were the Bishop, he wouldn't stand it.

"But what would you do?" asked Pemberton, thoroughly

puzzled, and wishing to ascertain the views of a wider circle, but the invariable answer he obtained was—"Oh I don't know—but I shouldn't stand it. I'd take my oath that I wouldn't stand it even for a day:" but how to stop it nobody seemed to have an idea.

It was easy enough to say "I won't stand it."

"Poor young thing—left to fight her battle as best she may, and then when the brute has worn her to death—by his beastly conduct—he will escape the gallows because he has murdered her only by inches. Ugh, it makes me sick!" he said to himself as he made his way back to Hugh's lodgings through the mud and slush.

If James Pemberton was so deeply perturbed there was actual dismay at St. Christophers, and neither Miss Kennard nor the Bishop could sleep at night for thinking of Beatrice. It was almost worse for Aunt Judy, for she sat at home for long hours in the cold dark weather, and therefore had plenty of time for miserable thoughts; whilst the Bishop was constantly in motion, going from place to place, holding confirmations in every part of his wide diocese. He gave the most eloquent, impressive charges wherever he went, and the thought of his child went with him, and lent a double earnestness to his words. Some of those who knelt before him might have a life like hers, and if so, he knew how desperately they would need the grace of the Holy Spirit to carry them unharmed through the fire of its temptations. He threw his whole heart into the entreaty—"Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," and the careless, the thoughtless, the frivolous, felt stirred for a few minutes at least, to some higher level than that of their customary levity, for there is a magnetic power in words that come straight from an agonizing heart, and all in the church felt it to some degree.

Appeals uttered in that deep vibrating voice which told of the passionate sincerity of the speaker, kept many erect and brave in their after conflict with the world—they gave new strength to the weak, new courage to the faltering, and a lively stirring up of religious impulse in the diocese followed on the steps of the sorrow-stricken father. Few could guess the burden which he carried about with him, for he bore himself bravely before the world: but when people congratulated him enthusiastically on his successful labours in his diocese, he said to himself with a sigh. "I can do something for these poor folk it seems, but nothing—absolutely nothing for my child!"

And yet he could do something—he could pray for her, and for her wretched husband, and that he did, night and morning, and at ever so many odd moments, during the busy day, still hoping against hope that his son-in-law might one day be brought to repentance.

Miss Kennard's vast amount of charity was utterly exhausted. She had no hope at all that Falconer would ever be better. He had inherited vicious tendencies from his father, and he was developing them to their fullest extent. Goodness was an unknown quantity, and he had not the power to understand it, or admire it. He would go on from bad to worse, and every time the bell rang imperatively, she thought it was a telegram to announce a catastrophe. As to the catastrophe, she was in a vague, horrified sort of fog—every now and then imagining that Pickles was flung out of a window, or Beatrice thrown head foremost down the broad staircase.

Nothing was too bad for Falconer to be capable of. She was convinced that he was possessed by the devil, and she saw no peace for anyone connected with him, until he was incapable of either speech or action in the long idleness of the grave. If the arrangement of events had been in her hands, she would accordingly have rung down the curtain for him in the middle of any scene, without waiting for him to withdraw with a graceful bow; for Aunt Judy could be fierce as a lioness when she was protecting her young, like most of the gentle creatures who have hearts besides intellects.

CHAPTER XLV.

PICKLES.

FLORA VIVIAN was standing in the window of her boudoir with a telegram in her hand, and a rueful look in her blue eyes. Mrs. Wentworth was ill—and she was summoned home at once by the agitated Colonel. It was probably only a bilious attack, or something equally prosaic, for Mrs. Wentworth had never been seriously ill, so made the most of every small ailment, but the consequences to Flora were just the same as if she were struck down by a most dangerous complaint. She could not stay away without seeming to be entirely heartless, and yet to leave London at the present moment was almost beyond the bounds of endurance.

Beatrice needed her more than ever. Lord Falconer was in a villainous temper, and nobody knew what new freak of vice or cruelty he might take it into his head to commit.

"Don't stay here, but go to the Grange," she said after a few minutes of anxious cogitation.

"Not for the world," Beatrice answered with a shudder, as she thought of a horrible month she had spent there, separated from all her friends—alone in that desolate house with her husband—always anticipating some dreadful tragedy to occur when he was half drunk and scarcely conscious of his actions, and only silence and solitude stretching for miles around, with no one to help or to hinder.

"Let me stay here, for goodness sake, with all my friends close at hand, and a policeman within call," she added with a laugh, as if she were joking, but she meant it in sad earnest.

Flo looked at her brave face wistfully, and then gave her a loving hug. "I can't bear to leave you," she said with tears in her eyes.

"I shall have Hugh soon—don't worry about me. He always cheers me up."

Not worry about her! Flora remembered that cry of "What will become of me?" at the football match, and considered that Hugh, impossible as it seemed, might recover too soon.

Beatrice took her to the station, and came back feeling very sad at the loss of her companionship. Fortunately her life was a busy one. Her name appeared on many committee lists, and she was constantly tormented to hold a stall at bazaars, or to figure in private theatricals or tableaux vivants, but nothing and nobody ever induced her to speak on a platform. In her own home she was a determined advocate of "Woman's Rights," as opposed to man's tyranny, but she would not lift up her voice in public, or help to attract a crowd by exhibiting her beauty to be stared at.

This afternoon she was due at a committee connected with a charity in South London, but it was not time for it yet, so she came home, and intended to look over some papers, in order that she might get up her subject before having to give an opinion on it. As she was stepping out of the carriage she saw Hugh Pemberton standing on the door-step, and her heart gave a bound of delight. He came forward to help her out with a bright smile on his face, but at the first glance she noticed how changed he was by his brief illness.

"How good of you to come," she said, with a happy ring in her soft young voice; "Flo has just left me, and I was feeling so low."

She led the way upstairs in a cheerful hurry, quite forgetting to say anything about the carriage in the pre-occupation of her mind. It was left to wait at the door indefinitely whilst she gave Hugh some tea to refresh him, and gave herself up to the enjoyment of a long unhindered talk. They had so much to say, and she was resolved that it should be said without any vexatious interruptions. Simmons was told to say "Not at home" to any other visitor, an order which he changed at his own discretion into "Her ladyship is going for a drive," as the brougham was still standing at the door. His master had told him not to admit Captain Pemberton if he came to call, but he was not able to carry out his instructions when the forbidden visitor arrived at the same moment as the lady on whom he was calling. Still, Simmons was in an uncomfortable state of mind so long as Hugh was in the house. If the Earl came home in time to find him there, forked lightning would be nothing to it; and even if Captain Pemberton were safely off the premises, that sneak James would be sure to tell his master that he had been there.

At last Waters, the coachman, began to think that he had made a mistake, and sent in to ask if he were wanted. Simmons took the message up instead of sending it by one of the footmen, according to his usual practice, and he was very glad that he had done so when he saw the startled look on either face, as each gazed in amazement at the clock.

A few minutes later, Falconer parted from some friends in Piccadilly and turned up Berkeley Street on his way home. He had heard some definite news about the prize-fight, and had come to the conclusion that if he wished to be present at it, he ought to start in the course of a few days. There was nothing to keep him in England, except his constantly recurring jealousy of Hugh Pemberton. If Pemberton were not in London he would start to-morrow; and yet, what good could he do by staying at home? If they chose to meet, they *would* meet, if they chose to love, they *would* love, and it was beyond his power to stop it. If Beatrice chose to run away with the fellow, which was scarcely possible, and certainly not probable, all the world would shout "Serve you right." What right had he to expect so much more from her—than he gave to her? And yet he did expect it, and by George! he meant to have it. She belonged

to him, and no man should take her from him. She was a good girl, and he knew he could trust her, but this fellow was her oldest friend. They talked of old times together—and that was the very devil.

Women were so absurdly sentimental. If a man began with "Do you remember?" they would listen to his nonsense for hours, and this cursed fellow was chock full of his reminiscences. He wished he had been drowned on the way home from India, or killed at the match the other day. If he could only know that he was dead, no matter how, and out of the way, it would be the greatest relief to his mind. As he was thinking of it, he reached the top of the steps at the entrance of the narrow passage which connects Berkeley Street with Curzon Street.

It was very dark, but a certain amount of light fell on the dirty stone steps from a lamp near at hand, and at the foot of them was Hugh Pemberton exactly facing him. Many years ago a man was nearly done to death on this very spot by a cowardly garrotter, and Falconer thought of it now, as his eye fell on the slight tall form, and the good-looking face of the man he hated. Probably he was coming straight from Clifford House, his mind gloating over Beatrice's sweet smiles and kind words—kinder words and sweeter smiles than she had given to her husband for many a day. He clenched his fist, he set his teeth, his breath came hard, as the fury of jealousy mounted like new wine to his brain. One blow would do it, he could fell him as flat as any fallen tree—he raised his arm, he took one step forward, and if ever man felt the murderous instincts of Cain surging within his fierce heart, Lord Falconer did at that moment.

Hugh looked up impatiently, wondering when this obstruction would get out of his way, and unable in the darkness to see who it was. There was a terrible contrast between his calm indifference and the murderous passion of the man who was only a few feet from him. In another moment Falconer's passion would have sprung into action, when a measured voice from behind said respectfully: "A few inches to the side, please sir," and giving a hurried look over his shoulder, he saw that a servant in grey livery was trying to guide an invalid-chair along the narrow pavement—and in that chair, sat, or rather lay—Gerald de Winton!

It was years since they had met, but Falconer knew him at once, and with a shudder at the grim memories called up by the sight of that broken life, he plunged hastily down the steps, passed by Pem-

berton as if he were not aware of his existence, hurried along that gloomy passage as if the devil were behind him, and emerged into the wider street with a deep breath of relief.

"Thank God, I never touched him," he said to himself as he strode on. "One of them on my mind is about enough."

When he opened the door of Clifford House with his latch-key, Simmons met him in the hall with something new in the expression of his usually impassive face.

"Lord Clifford, my lord, is not well. Her ladyship has sent for the doctor."

"Not well! What do you mean? Has he had a fall through somebody's infernal carelessness?" fiercely, as he felt a sudden grip at his heart. He had always had a vague dread that God's vengeance for his own misdoings would fall on the boy's innocent head. It did not make the smallest difference in his conduct, but it was always in the back-ground of his mind like a ghost waiting for midnight. That was why the sight of the small coffin had so affected him. He thought of it again as he hurried up the stairs, without waiting for any further explanation from the butler. Pickles—bright, cheery little Pickles! Would he never hear his laugh again; never feel his small arms clinging round his neck?

As he opened the door of the night-nursery with an unusually gentle hand, he saw his wife sitting by the fire with his child upon her knee. She was bending over him, her face almost hidden by the broad brim of her picture hat, whilst the boy's flushed cheek rested against the soft fur of her seal-skin coat. The walls were hung with bright pictures, and there was a general air of comfort and loving care about the room. A row of tiny garments hung on the brass guard, a bath with a can of hot water beside it stood at a little distance, and the nurse was busily stirring up some childish condiment in a basin, her white cap standing out prominently against the dark back-ground of a Japanese screen. The picture of that homely scene remained long photographed on Falconer's brain, though he scarcely took it in at the moment in his anxiety. All the thoughts of jealousy and revenge which had entirely filled his mind, vanished. He had even forgotten to ask Simmons if Captain Pemberton had been there: his furious passion cooled down in an instant, for the thought of Pickles in danger banished everything else, as he came as softly as he could across the room.

"What is it?" he asked hoarsely, as he gently pushed back the child's clustering curls.

"We don't know," Beatrice answered in a low voice, "but his head is so heavy and he seems so tired."

"What have you done to him?" he asked in unreasoning anger, for it was always so fatally easy for him to be ill-tempered. "He was all right when I left. 'Pon my soul, it seems as if I ought never to be out of the house!"

Under any other circumstances, Beatrice would have laughed at the idea that his presence could possibly conduce to the safety of the house, or that of any one in it, but she was now in too poignant a state of anxiety to see the ludicrous side of any question. This is what she had always dreaded—that her boy should fall ill. Other mothers, with half a dozen children, might take it casually when one amongst the many was ailing—but Pickles was the sole consolation of her troubled life. The hour that they waited for the doctor seemed like ten. Every now and then Falconer insisted on taking the child in his arms, and walking with it up and down the room, but the poor little fellow, for once in his short life, only wanted to be quiet, and always cried to go back to his mother. Every now and then he turned angrily upon the nurse, and required her to tell him what was the matter with the child.

Mrs. Whiffins answered him time after time in the same equable voice, "I've been with measles, and scarletina and whooping cough, and I've nursed 'em day and night, and never lost a case."

"Yes, but which is it?" impatiently. "Any fool ought to know the difference."

"The symptoms are much the same, my lord. I would rather not say which it was till the doctor comes." And then she would turn to the child and try to give him a spoonful of the mixture she had been preparing so carefully, whilst Falconer was fuming with impatience.

"He must have been eating something unwholesome," he asserted after a pause. "What has he had to-day?"

"The wing of a chicken and some custard-pudding for his dinner—nothing since, except a few chocolates—I think my lady said."

"Who gave him the chocolates?" quickly.

"Captain Pemberton," Beatrice answered quietly, as she pressed her cool cheek to the child's burning forehead. That name was like a match to the fuse of a bomb.

"That infernal blackguard!" he exclaimed with flashing eyes. "He has poisoned the boy with his detestable stuff. What right had he to put his foot in my house?"

"Hush, for God's sake!" Beatrice entreated as Pickles began to cry. "You will frighten the child to death." It was only a weak little whimper which sounded infinitely more pathetic than the howls of passion which the child indulged in now and then, but it produced no effect on his father.

"Give him to nurse," he said roughly, "and come away; I've something to say to you."

"I am not going to leave him for anything or anybody," she said with decision, as she held him closer to her breast. Defiance leapt into her eyes, and her heart swelled to overflowing with the fullness of her motherly love.

Passion as usual over-rode everything else in her husband's breast, and he was simply bent on giving it full swing without respect to place or circumstance. Anger against his wife was a stronger feeling at this moment than fear for the child. His anxiety was still there, but it was completely smothered by the heat of his temper. He stretched out his hand as if to seize the child by main force from the protection of his mother's arms. Beatrice was looking up into his scowling face, white to the very lips, but still resolute in defence. The nurse, roused at last from her passivity, was about to place her bulky form between her little charge and her infuriated master, when the door was thrown open and Dr. Severn was announced.

A short gentlemanly man, with bright eyes that took in everything, and a look of reserve that let out nothing, entered the room briskly; and at his entrance, a sudden calm stopped the impending storm. He seemed to notice nothing as he went straight up to the mother and child.

CHAPTER XLVI.

PATERNAL AFFECTION.

ONLY the measles! Falconer remembered that he had suffered from them himself years ago, and that they had left no unpleasant foot-marks behind them. He took it for granted therefore that Pickles would be all right in a day or two, and went off alone to a dinner-party as Beatrice refused to accompany him. His hostess looked at him suspiciously when he made some slight apology for his wife's non-appearance, but as dinner was announced at the same moment she could not pursue the subject.

Morose and sullen, he scarcely made any effort to entertain either Mrs. Haughton on his left, or Lady Sylvester, a fair frisky matron, on his right, but sat immersed in unpleasant thoughts, and slipped away as soon as dinner was over to keep an assignation at "The Folly" music hall with a girl who was dazzled by his coronet, frightened by himself, and alternately terrified and delighted by her conquest.

"Only the measles, indeed!" exclaimed Lady Malvern. "It is, thanks to them, that I am a forlorn widow with only my own self to think of. They seem to have a partiality for the Clifford family, though you needn't tell Beatrice that I said so."

"Not for the world," exclaimed Millie, who was paying a morning call in Queen Anne's Gate. "I can't understand why she does not divorce him, and marry that delightful Hugh Pemberton," Millie said dreamily, as she thought of her own futile attempts to annex him.

"Principle, my dear—principle. Thank goodness I threw them all overboard when I married Malvern, and never had time to pick them up again. And as for you, I don't believe you ever had any," regarding her visitor with a pair of twinkling eyes.

Millie did not know whether to take this assertion as a compliment or the reverse. Certainly principles did not interfere with her pleasure, but she imagined that they acted as a check on her proceedings, and prevented her from going too far. She analysed her flirtation with Baron Varicourt all the way home, but could not see anything amiss. If he advanced too hotly she prided herself on the delicate way in which she managed to chill him off, but on the other hand if

he showed the slightest symptoms of slackening, none knew better than herself how to draw him on. And as to Sir Digby, no wife could give a wandering husband a warmer welcome whenever he elected to come back; and when he went away she made a point of putting on her prettiest frock, that he might have a nice remembrance of her till they should meet again.

"Could any wife have a better set of principles?" she asked, with a vast amount of self-satisfaction, and as she was alone at the time in her tiny brougham there was nobody to contradict her.

Presently she espied Falconer. She stopped the brougham and popped her head out of the window, and anyone who knew her could see that she meant mischief. She had taken it into her head that he was perfectly indifferent about his son's illness, although he made his affection for him so inconveniently apparent when he was well, and being given to setting people to rights in a light-hearted way, she thought she ought to frighten him into a decent amount of anxiety.

"How's Pickles?" she asked, with great interest.

She was looking very pretty in a large red hat with a plume of ostrich feathers, and under it her style of bijou beauty seemed quite bewitching. Consequently Falconer came up to the carriage with an unusually amiable smile.

"Going on all right—thanks. Only measles, you know."

"They have a partiality for the Cliffords—so Lady Malvern says."

"What utter rot she talks! All children have it as regularly as teething—and they are none the worse for it afterwards."

"If they ever get over it," she said, quickly. "Lord Malvern had to give up his betting, his Heidsieck, his favourite brand of cigars, and all his little comforts—and go. 'Measles' was the name of the station from which he started."

He looked down into her face with a dull stare. "What the mischief do you mean? My uncle Malvern was a worn out old bloated drunkard. He didn't start fair."

"And your own brother Frank?" she asked imperturbably.

"He sat in a puddle or a draught, and Pickles won't have a chance of doing either. If I had a wife like you," he went on, anxious to change the subject, "I would not run away quite so often as Crosby does."

"If I had a husband like you," she said sweetly, "I should be the one to run away, and you could stay at home if you liked."

Then she pulled up the window, and Falconer gave a little laugh as he raised his hat, and walked off. Millie, however, had attained her object, and made him thoroughly uncomfortable. None of his other friends had thought anything of the measles, and he had quite forgotten that his uncle and his brother had died of them. Francis Clifford died when he was so young that he made no impression by his departure, and there were so many reasons for Lord Malvern's death that most people had forgotten that measles was one of them. The idea of death being in any way connected with this childish malady, gave him a scare, and would have sent him straight home, if he had not remembered an engagement to look at a horse somewhere in the neighbourhood of the New Road. Whilst looking at the horse he came across some of his kindred spirits, men who made it the object of their lives to lead others on the downward grade. They were so successful with Falconer that they sent him home about one a.m. with muddled brains and unsteady legs.

The latter carried him up to the nursery, where he found his wife keeping watch while the nurse rested. Beatrice put her finger to her lips to enjoin silence, for Pickles, after a restless day, had at last fallen asleep. His eyes met hers dully, but a great drowsiness was upon him. He wished to say something sharp, or at least to ask how the boy was, but instead of doing either, he subsided into an arm-chair which was too small for him, and stretching out his long legs in front of him, fell into a heavy sleep which lasted for many hours. He told a friend the next day that he was quite done for, having sat up all night with his boy, and the friend thought that there was some good in Falconer after all. Paternal affection shone out like a newly discovered star in the murky night of vice.

(To be continued.)

The Wanton New Year.

By S. E. SAVILLE.

"If I be served such a trick, I'll have my brains taken out and buttered, and give them to a dog for a New Year's Gift."

Merry Wives of Windsor.

WE, as descendants of Roman and Gothic ancestors, have meanly slighted their benefactors, who, in the shapes of Janus, Juno, etc., watched over their prosperity and fortune. We have neglected these jovial tutelaries, and taken unto ourselves strange gods, with long faces, sombre habiliments, and the New Year is ushered in with no blast of trumpets, and scarce a clang of bells. The Victorian Englishman, with all his sincere greeting, "a happy New Year to you," has a shamefacedness as he looks out on the New Year, and finds his countrymen devoted to gold and the making of it. Probably in his soul there lurks a remote acknowledgment of his nation's neglect of the ancient and once honoured festivals dedicated to the gods of the New Year. It is not altogether without regret that he thinks of pale-faced Juno sitting on her lonely throne, without a solitary garland, one tribute of incense, or a gift of honey.

I have always found, however, Englishmen ready to listen to tales of their ancestors—of their worship, of their work, and most of all, of their play-days. Perhaps a few words on New Year's Festivities, at this season, will bring to remembrance customs which made their grandsires cheeks to glow and eyes to sparkle.

January is a corruption of Juno, or Janus. From earliest antiquity, on the first day of this month the Romans held solemn festivals, made vows, and offered gifts to those Deities. Horace calls this day "tristes Kalendae," because all debtors were required to pay their interest, and it was a sad day for those with empty purses or niggardly souls. Janus was the Porter of heaven, and, as such, held two surnames, *Patrilcus*, the opener, and *Clusius*, the shutter. It was the practice of sculptors to represent him with two faces, one looking back over the old year, the other forward to the new. Some ingenious Senator had him carved with four faces, and thus

he presided over the four seasons. He also symbolized the beginning and opening of everything, and hence the first month of the year was called after him. It was a feature of the Romans to attribute ill-success to an ill-beginning. Strong in this belief, the most careless were roused on New Year's Day to make some effort in securing a good omen with which to begin the year. They gave presents, abstained from quarrelling, were anxious that their words and actions should be blameless, and acceptable to the gods. They did some good or charitable work, believing that their exemplary behaviour on this day would assure them good fortune for the year. Bribing the deities, we might call it—as their posterity try to do—in another way.

In his original character, Janus was god of the sun, and his glorious golden face lured many European races to worship. Near to the Forum in Rome stood the long covered passage, dedicated to Janus, whose gates were closed in time of peace, and thrown wide open in times of troublous war. This, to give free access to the god whom they hoped would be induced to join the Roman armies against their enemies. They were seldom closed, as the vast empire of Rome, surrounded by so many barbarous nations, generally had some war on hand. In the reign of Augustus Cæsar it was shut three times. In Numa's long reign of forty-three years it was not open for a single day.

In remote times, the Roman year began in March, and was of ten months only. Numa Pompilius added January and February, making twelve, and the year began as now on January first. This was a day of high mirth, and presents were exchanged. Titus Tatius at one time received a branch from the forest consecrated to Strenia, goddess of strength; this he was convinced brought him good luck. Anxious that his subjects should participate in his good fortune, he instituted the custom of yearly gifts, which were to be made on the first of January, and he called these gifts *Strenæ*. The people made presents of sweetmeats, honey, figs and dates, covered with leaf gold. They carried such to their patrons, adding silver or copper coins, which showed on one side the double-headed Janus, on the other a ship. These coins were supposed to be expended in purchase of statues of some divinities. Under the rule of Augustus the Senate, knights and people presented New Year's Gifts to the Emperor, in his absence, they were deposited in the Capitol.

After various religious duties had been performed—sacrifices made to Janus, and other gods of the season, offerings made, and prayers said—a long and gay procession was arranged. A file of soldiers headed the line, a body of infantry followed a mounted regiment. Always some grotesque figure, with huge gaping mouth and snapping teeth, was held up for the amusement of the populace. People were disguised, and represented historical characters—kings, queens, harlequins, children with wings singing, and various comic groups. In the days of early christianity, these processions were still continued, but their character changed. The representations were all biblical—Solomon, David, Deborah, and the Virgin Mother took the places of Homer's and Virgil's heroes.

The festivities of New Year's Day were concluded by games, feasts and grotesque shows. They had their superstitions, too; no person ventured to carry fire from his house, or anything made of iron; he was careful not to lend anything on that day, for these things were deemed unlucky, and none chose to seek the frown of the gods on the first day of the New Year. These superstitious ideas are still prevalent in Hertfordshire—a remnant of the heritage left by our Roman conquerors.

The practice of giving and receiving presents for luck survives in such instances as the French "*jour J'etrennes*," and the Scottish "*Handsel Monday*," from the Dutch *Handsel*—a first gift.

In England the custom of making New Year's Gifts to patrons and sovereigns dates back to Henry the Sixth. Gloves, which were costly and handsome presents, and highly prized, were among the favourite gifts of that time. In the reign of Elizabeth this custom was carried to an extravagant height. There is a story told of the court jester of Charles I, who, receiving a present of gold from a nobleman, was not satisfied. He jingled the coins in his hand, saying, "*It is light, your lordship.*"

"Give it back to me," said the nobleman.

The jester, not doubting but that his lordship would substitute for it a larger sum, handed it back.

"I once gave money to a fool who had not the wit to keep it," said his patron, putting the rejected coin in his pocket.

The Jews do not celebrate the first of January, but believe that the world was created on the first day of their civil year, and the destiny of everybody is fixed on that day, which falls somewhere

corresponding to our October. They are scrupulous in observing this day as a Sabbath, with numberless services and prayers. They greet each other with "May you be writ to a good year." At the evening meal the father cuts up a sweet apple, which he distributes amongst his family, each one dips his piece into a cup of honey and eats it saying "To a good year and a sweet one." They put as much prayer and fasting, and sombre joy into their New Year's Day as Jews can. They are a patient, wearisome, long suffering people, which shows itself in their long phylacteries, long robes, long prayers, long beards, long services beginning as the day dawns, and not ending until its hours have closed. They have much persistency and pertinacity in their religious rites and ceremonies.

In New York city, New Year's Day is accounted more important than Christmas Day. On New Year's Eve the children hang up their stockings, and never find that Santa Claus has exhausted his stock of gifts on the Christmas bairns, but has a goodly heap in store for them. The adults spend the day paying complimentary visits, and in leaving greetings and presents, and have a real social, enjoyable time.

Among the Persians it is a day of religious festivity; their temples are decorated, and prayers and offerings made to the Fire God. Visits are paid, much social intercourse exchanged, and alms given to the poor. Presents of eggs are made to one another, this custom they call "*nev rûz*," and believe that it will bring good fortune to them.

Formerly, on New Year's Day, a strange kind of pantomime was carried on in some of the cathedral cities of Europe. The Feast of Fools, it was called; a Bishop or Archbishop, and a Pope of Fools was elected. These mock Pontiffs, in ecclesiastical robes, marched to the church. There a ceremony was performed which caused much boisterous amusement—the shaving of the Precentor of Fools. He was placed upon a stage before the church in the presence of a vast crowd of spectators. His gesticulations, clownish discourses, and pantomimic dress were sources of continued merriment to the vulgar crowd. The priests and people then entered the church there, with smutted faces, or in masks representing monsters, the cleric fools performed a ritualistic farce. They chanted comic songs "ate rich pudding on the corner of the altar, played dice upon it, by the side of the priest, while he celebrated mass, incensed it with smoke from old burnt shoes, and ran leaping all over the church."

At the conclusion, the Bishop of Fools was drawn in an open carriage, through the town, followed by clergy and laymen. A cart accompanied them, from which boys threw rubbish at the populace—altogether a gross and unseemly proceeding. Such mummeries were greatly discouraged by the early Fathers, and by various provincial synods, but at the same time they were the delight of the people who always cling to the grotesque and the comic.

Mediæval England was full of mirth and mischief on the Eve of the New Year. The English took many of their customs from the Britons who hawked about the Wassail bowl, made of oak or silver, inscribed "Was haile"—Here's to you! and "Drine-heil"—I'll pledge you.

It is identified with the Grace-cup of the Greeks and Romans, which was quaffed from immediately after grace, at the Greek and Roman dinners.

"The Grace Cup served, the cloth away,
Jove thought it time to show his play."

Guisers wandered about the streets, singing and frightening the children with their blackened faces, and grotesque costumes. Friends visited friends, and drew round the huge Yule log, drinking each other's health in spiced ale, from a bowl tied with gay ribbons. They ate god-cakes, small triangular pastries of an inch thick, filled with mince meat. "Yule" is a Gothic or Saxon word, from *Jul* or *Yul*, meaning a sumptuous treat. It was a religious feast, held at the winter solstice. January was styled *Guili*, the Festival. The feast was dedicated to the *Šun*, their supreme deity.

In some countries peasants send about small pyramids, made of leaves, apples, nuts, etc., of copper gilt, a practice probably borrowed from the Mistletoe of Druidical worship. Tenants sent capons to their landlords; Eton boys presented verses to their masters; and friends gave gilt nutmegs, and oranges stuck with cloves to their companions.

Scotland is a country of many interesting customs: in some of the villages it is customary for the poor children to get swaddled in sheets which they double up in front so as to form a vast pocket. They go out in bands calling at the doors for doles of oaten bread, and sing,

"Hogmanay, trollolay,
Give us of your white bread.
And none of your gray."

Some of the children in this way collect quite a plentiful supper of cake and cheese.

Sir Walter Scott delighted in these old customs, which are like bits of fairy tales in one's life. He sought out with eagerness the ancient relics, which still are to be found scattered about in the more solitary places of the British Isles and other European countries. And there are humbler writers than Sir Walter who will be sorry to see these remnants of the merry doings of our Fathers swept away and lost in the débris of inmodern jerry-built institutions which form some of the artificial amusements of the satiated youth of to-day.

A Commonplace Couple.

AN ANGLO-INDIAN SKETCH.

By ALICE GREY.

HE was certainly a queer looking specimen. Even for a "Griffin" he was remarkable, and they are a strange species. It was not exactly that he was ugly, he was scarcely that, nor that he was ungentelemanly in appearance, for that he certainly was not, but he was so unusual looking. Above all he was so *unyoung*. He looked more like an old German professor, than a lad fresh from the University. His ways were queer too. Considering that his screw was really very decent for a youngster, it was wonderful how shabby he managed to look on it. He played no games, kept no polo ponies, could not afford a cart apparently, and seemed to grudge even an occasional ride in a gharri. No one knew much about him, he had no friends, and took no trouble to make any. Yet sometimes I used to feel sorry for him, he was such a forlorn looking creature.

The first time I remember noticing him was one night at the club. We had been having a round at whist, and a man had just come in, and told us of an outbreak of cholera in some Indian station where his brother was. The men were going down like ninepins, in the attack, he said.

Williams had been my partner, and was still sitting opposite me. I saw him go pale to the lips.

"Will—will it come on here, do you suppose?" he asked, in a voice that fairly trembled.

"No, no," cried old Major Levant, "we don't get cholera here, my boy, thank God. Not among the Europeans at any rate. I don't know when a case was last heard of."

"I'm glad of that," the Griffin replied, more assured, "for I always feel, that if I am near cholera, I shall be sure to get it."

"You seem very much afraid of it," said someone bluntly.

"No. I'm not afraid of it, but I can't afford to die." He looked out of the window and smiled, and I wondered why.

He was a Chinese student, and in due course, when he passed his elementary, he was shunted on to China for a year, to perfect himself in the language. Strange stories reached us occasionally of his mode of living up there, but he soon died out of my mind. In the east one can forget one's dearest friend in much less than a year, and there was no reason why I should remember him.

I was coming up the club steps one day about eighteen months after this, when I came face to face with him again. He had never been much to look at, but I was shocked at the change in him. His cheeks, naturally thin, were hollow and drawn, his eyes were large and more strained, and his figure looked a couple of inches taller, and gaunt as a skeleton.

"Why, Williams," I exclaimed, "what have you been doing to yourself?"

"Glad to see you, old chap. Oh nothing. I'm all right,"

"You look a ghost," I said, "been working too hard I suppose."

Upstairs I heard other reasons. Young Manners, who had been to China with him, was holding forth at great length.

"He lived like a pig," he was saying, "or what's worse, he lived à la Chinaman, all the time he was there. Five cents a day *must* have covered all his expenses, but never a penny of his did I see besides. I call it disgusting, really a disgrace to government, to starve and stint like that, with nothing to show in the end. Men of that kind ought to be kept out of the service."

"That's all very well, Manners," said a civilian, who was senior to both of them, "but Williams is an uncommonly clever chap. To take honours in Chinese your first year, is quite a record."

"I daresay, but hang it all, one wants *gentlemen* first of all."

"Just as well for you perhaps, that brains take a second place,"

sneered the civilian, and Manners, who had only just scraped through, took a back seat for the rest of the afternoon.

Just as I was going home, Williams came up to me, and offered me a lift. He had a new buggy, quite a smart little turn-out. That was one result of his savings, anyway. I jumped up beside him, and we started off. I soon saw that he was trying to tell me something, and marvelled; he was a man of few words.

"I am engaged to be married," he said at last.

"You are, by Jove?" I cried, "who is the happy lady? Is she—" I was going to add, "of Chinese extraction," but stopped in time.

"Yes," he continued, his tongue loosed, now that the first plunge was over. "She is on her way out. We have been engaged for years. I hope you will come to the wedding."

"Delighted," I replied, wondering what sort of a girl she was, who was going to marry this bag-of-bones.

"Perhaps you may have wondered sometimes," he went on, "why I have been so careful of my money. We were saving up. We couldn't afford to marry till we had got enough together."

"It's poor economy to starve," I said.

"Oh it hasn't hurt me, and now it's over."

He proceeded to tell me all about the bungalow he had taken, the furniture he had got, even to the piano he had sent home for, till I began to marvel at the transformation in the man, and to realize that we had somewhat misjudged him. Still, I wondered what sort of a girl it was.

I suppose I put on a certain amount of interest in his tales, for he waxed bolder, gave me a pressing invitation to come and see his new abode, and once drew up under a lamp post, that I might examine the photograph he carried about in his pocket. It was a very ordinary face, I thought, but I suppose to him it was divine. Needless to say, I never went to the bungalow, but about three weeks later, I was bidden to his wedding. Moved by some idle curiosity, and because, in spite of myself I was in a kind of a way interested in him, I went. They were married from the Colonial Secretary's house, and the small reception after the ceremony, was held there. I was introduced to Mrs. Williams. She said she had often heard of me, which surprised me. She seemed to be under the impression that her husband and I were friends. They both pressed me much to come out and see them,

which was a nuisance, but I was glad I had been that afternoon. It gave me something to chuckle over for days, the sight of Williams as a married man. Of course I took no notice of that invitation either; a couple on their honeymoon are not the most interesting people to visit.

One day—it was New Year's Day and the sports were on—I met them down on the Esplanade. Williams was looking better, though still emaciated. Mrs. Williams looked blooming. I went over to their carriage and shook hands with her.

"You never came to see us," she said, shaking her head at me, while he jumped out, and offered me his seat beside her. "This time we shan't let you off till we have fixed the day."

"Yes," said Williams, "come to dinner some night, old chap. Settle it with my wife."

So saying he strolled off to the pavilion and I took his place.

I saw she was watching him.

"You must take care of that husband of yours, Mrs. Williams," I said, "he doesn't know how to take care of himself evidently."

"No, poor boy," she said, "I don't know how he has lived these past two years. I am afraid he has been scrimping himself to send money home."

"Yours has been a long engagement!" I said tentatively.

"Oh yes, four years. You see we were both poor, and had to wait." She seemed glad to tell me about themselves, "We met first in Germany. I was giving English lessons in a school near Stuttgardt, and one of the pupils took me home with her one day. He was tutor in the family. It was love at first sight."

That, it struck me, was a foolish expression. Love is always blind, and it must have been particularly so, in her case.

"Of course we knew we should have to wait. He was only working up then for his exam. People laughed at us for what they called our foolishness at entering into an engagement at all, but foolish or not, I know it just made all the difference in our lives. To feel that we were waiting and working for *something* took all the drudgery out of them. But why do I tell you all this, it must bore you?"

"Not at all," I said, "you have no idea how refreshing it is to a poor blasé old Anglo-Indian like me, to hear of anything so fresh and idyllic."

"It was a long struggle," she went on, "but God helped us, He has been very good to us."

It is not often you hear a word of religion spoken in the East, it quite startled me.

"Did you stay on in Germany?" I asked.

"Oh yes, I had to live. All the money my husband sent home, went towards my passage, and the furniture.

"Didn't they pay you well?"

"Just enough to starve on." She smiled. "I can afford to smile now, it is all over, but it was dreadful at times. Only the thought of the future kept me up, I think."

It was arranged I was to dine with them the following Tuesday, and in due time I presented myself at their abode. I was rather favourably surprised with it, on the whole. Though scrupulously simple, and almost bare, the things were in good taste. There was no rubbish, and the whole place had an air of refinement, that bungalows in the East often lack. There was another man dining besides myself. After dinner—which was a short and simple affair—we sat on the verandah and havered, till I remembered the piano, and asked Mrs. Williams for a song. I am sufficiently musical to dislike second-rate performances, but this was clearly my duty. She rose without demur, and we went inside, leaving the other two still smoking. When she began, I did not wonder at her lack of hesitation. The first chord she struck, showed me she was a born musician. Her voice was low and thrilling, it stirred me strangely. Song after song she sang; I think we had both forgotten our surroundings. Suddenly she broke into that curiously soul-stirring melody—"Oh rest in the Lord." Her yearning, thrilling notes rose and fell in the stillness of the room. The last verse came like a cry of triumph—

"And He shall give thee thine heart's desire.

And He *shall* give thee thine heart's desire."

So passionate was her voice that instinctively I glanced up at her. She was not looking at her music, nor at me, nor at anything in the room, but her head was turned sideways, and her eyes were fixed on the verandah, where, through the open door, we could see the form of her husband, as he sat in his wicker chair, in the little patch of lamp-light that came from the room. And as I looked at her face, I was struck by a strange change in it. I have said she was

common-place looking, but to-night, at least, she was beautiful. Her eyes, full of love and passion, were large and lustrous, her cheeks were flushed, her lips parted, her whole face aflame with something that transcended my comprehension. And her voice still rose and fell, now pleading, now triumphant.

"And He shall give thee thine heart's desire."

Surely our hearts have strange desires in this world!

Not long after this, I happened to be riding past their house one morning, and looked in on them. As I came up the drive, I was amused at the sight that caught my eye. Mrs. Williams was standing in the compound, the sun streaming down on her uncovered head, looking the picture of despair; beside her stood the gardener, wearing that expression of stolid imbecility that only the face of a native can assume, while all round them lay pots of ferns and flowers of every description.

When she caught sight of me she uttered an exclamation of relief. "Oh, I am so glad to see you," she cried. "You will be able to help me."

"First of all, get into the shade," I replied sternly. "You are courting sunstroke."

She retreated to the porch.

"I have been in such difficulties," she continued. "This stupid man won't try in the least to understand me."

"Have you tried him in his own language?"

"Oh, yes, of course I have; look, it's all here."

She waved a little red book at me—a book I know well. "Hints to the Vernacular," I think it is called. It has confused many an unwary soul, and will go on confusing them, I suppose, until it is forcibly suppressed.

"What have you been trying him with?" I asked.

"'Conversations with a gardener,'" she read out; "but it's most confusing. Even if I happen to find what I want to say, and read it to him, he never makes an answer in the least like he ought to, so we never get any farther."

I laughed.

"Tell me what you want him to do," I said, "that's the shortest way."

When I translated her instructions to the man, he broke into

voluble explanations as to why he had been unable to carry out the mem sahib's orders before. Apparently he had been under the impression she was talking to him in English! I spared her the humiliation of letting her know this.

"Don't you admire my pots," she asked, as we watched him arranging them in long rows on the steps by the front door. "My husband got them for me yesterday, at an auction."

She surveyed with pride the numbers of gorgeous begonias, and the Eucharist lilies with their heavy-headed shoots. "It seems so strange to think all this belongs to me. Why, I believe the only plant I ever possessed in my life before was a little pot of pansies one of my pupils gave me once. It died in a week, and I remember I shed salt tears over it." She laughed at the recollection, yet the tears were not far from her eyes even then. "How far away that time seems now," she concluded, "just like some unpleasant dream, the very memory of which almost fades with the morning."

"Yet even that had its bright glimpses, I suppose," I said.

"Oh, yes, the pansy episode was one—till it died. And, as I told you, the thought of the future. As long as you have something to look forward to, you can endure even the drudgery of a German school. Of course you will stop to breakfast," she said after a pause. "My husband will be so glad to see you. Ah, here he is."

Her face lighted up as William's cadaverous form hove in sight. She ran out to meet him, and he took the solar topee off his own head and put it on hers.

"Ah, old chap," he said, "good of you to look us up again. Come in and the wife will give us some breakfast."

I had not had the slightest intention of staying, but they overruled my objections, and we went in together.

Breakfast in the East is the most un-home-like meal you can take, yet somehow or other Mrs. Williams seemed to infuse a certain English atmosphere into it that morning, that I could not fail to notice. Something of the same sort seemed to strike Williams.

His wife was making the coffee from a little urn in front of her, and he was watching her. Presently he spoke in his jerky way. "Take my word for it, old chap, the best thing a man can do, is to get married. Never knew what comfort was till I got a wife of my own."

His wife shook her head.

"He never knew how to take care of himself in the least. You don't know how horrified I was when I first arrived, to find him such an object!"

"Cunji is not a fattening diet," chuckled Williams, "but it's economical."

"A very poor sort of economy," said his wife, "it would have been better to have waited another year or two than to have economized like that."

"Do you think so?" said Williams.

We drove down to the office together, Williams and I. He was full of his own prospects that morning, and looked at everything through rose-coloured spectacles.

Certainly he was a smart enough chap in his own queer way, and likely to get on—if only by sheer hard work,—but I was amazed at the way he had planned out his whole future, step by step, from one appointment to another, till the summit of all ambition should be reached, and he became an M.C.

"You seem to forget," I said once, "there is usually but one way in which a man gets promotion. How do you propose to kill off all the men senior to you in the service?"

Williams laughed. "Oh, well," he said, "it's a bad climate, and there are so many of us. We can't all go on living for ever, I suppose. Some of us must die."

The next day the whole island was startled and shocked by a piece of news which went the round at the rate that all bad news does travel. The judge had been struck down by cholera, and was lying dead in his house, after four hours' illness! How he got it remains a mystery to this day. It was supposed he brought it down with him from up-country on his last circuit, but, if so, it had taken a long time to develop. Not another case had been heard of, within a hundred miles.

He had been loved and respected by all, and the whole colony, pretty well, turned out at his funeral.

It was late afternoon, and the wet season had begun, and, though it was not actually raining, a heavy malarial mist was rising, and the whole cemetery was reeking.

In the east we have a way of poking our dead as far as possible out of sight, and, perhaps, it is the best plan in a country where the

whole English population changes completely every few years. The cemetery was a long way from the town, behind the race-course, a dreary, desolate spot, visited by no one, and, in the rains, little better than a marsh. That afternoon, however, the sight was an imposing one. Every department of the service was strongly represented. The Governor and his staff were there, the regimental band was playing, and behind the gloomy cypress trees, the red setting sun shot its blood-red rays in long shafts through the mist to our feet. There was no woman there.

Far away in England, his wife—the wife of the man we were putting underground—was all unconscious of what had happened to her.

It was Friday. Most probably she was writing her mail letters—those letters that were destined to be returned to her unopened a couple of months hence.

In the middle of the service, glancing casually round, I caught sight of a face that arrested my attention.

Gaunt, white, haggard, Williams was staring straight at me, every muscle in his face and forehead rising like a great cord under the skin. So ghastly was this apparition, that after the conclusion of the service I felt compelled to seek him out.

I caught him up by the gate, and put my fingers round his arm, above the elbow. It seemed to be little more than a bone I was holding, and I found he was shaking from head to foot.

"Why, man," I cried, "what ails you? Is it a touch of ague, or did you have a heavy night of it last night?"

He turned his hollow eyes on me.

"Do you think," he almost whispered, "we are going to have any more of this?"

"Any more of what? *Cholera*, do you mean? Don't tell me you are in a funk about *that*."

"I am not in a funk about it, but I feel sure, if it comes here, I shall get it. Tell me, is there much chance of it, do you think?"

"Of course there's not, my boy—not the ghost of a chance. Why, it's always been our boast that such a thing has not been heard of in the island. This was quite an accident, and a very strange one, too."

"I know you think me a coward," he said deprecatingly. "I'm not that; but I *can't* die now—oh, not *now*!"

"Nobody wants you to," I replied, half exasperated, half touched. I watched him get into his dog-cart and drive away. How lean he was and how he stooped over the reins! Had he grasped at happiness too quickly after all, poor beggar, and was it going to elude him even now?

The man I had come with touched me on the shoulder.

"Come away," he said. "I have had enough of this fever-trap. Ugh! look at my boots."

They were soaking, so was the long grass in which we stood. From the low marshy land around us came the dismal croak of many a bull-frog. Through the mist I saw the crowd dispersing. It had broken up into little groups; doubtless they were discussing the strange event that had taken place. It was a gloomy evening, a chill seemed to have settled down on us all. I was glad when we had left the cemetery behind us, and we were on our way to the club. The prospect of some cheerful society and a game of billiards was reviving after the afternoon we had spent.

"Death is not an attractive thought at any time," said the man I was with, "but if I must die, preserve me from being buried out yonder. Fancy lying out there this night, with only the bull-frogs for your companions, and the water oozing into your coffin!"

He shuddered. I drew up under the club porch, and we both jumped out with alacrity.

Driving down to the office next day, I was hailed by Major Levant as I passed the club. I pulled up for a moment.

"Have you seen Williams this morning?" he called out.

"No. What's up with him?"

"The Devil, I should say. He passed in a gharri, not half-an-hour ago, looking pretty deadly."

Williams did not turn up at office all the morning, and his face, as I had seen it the night before, haunted me uncomfortably. At tiffin time I could stand it no longer, and calling for my cart, started off to find out what was wrong with him.

Their bungalow was some way out, and down a lonely road. I did not pass a creature on the way. As I came up the carriage drive, I noticed a strange stillness everywhere. There was no gardener at work, no syce cutting grass for his horse; it seemed as if I had come to a land of the dead. Arrived under the porch, I called for the boy, and called in vain. This same unbroken stillness seemed to possess the house also.

With a queer sinking at the heart, I jumped down, and ran up the verandah stairs. The verandah was deserted, so was the drawing room. As I stood in the middle of the room, uncertain what to do next, I heard a slight movement in one of the bedrooms beyond. "Mrs. Williams," I cried, now fairly alarmed, "Mrs. Williams." For a moment there was silence again, then one of the half-doors opened and Mrs. Williams stood before me.

She smiled, and her smile froze the marrow in my bones.

"You are too late," she said, "he died just half-an-hour ago."

I said nothing: it seemed as if I had known it already—as if I had known what would happen all along.

Mrs. Williams spoke again.

"Come and see him," she said softly, "he is quite peaceful now."

I followed her into the bedroom. He lay so still and white, I could scarcely believe he had just died in agony. Something too had come with death that I had not noticed on his face before.

"How did it happen?" I asked at last.

"Cholera. The doctor—did you meet him, he has only just left?—said his constitution must have been thoroughly undermined, to have laid him open to the attack. It was because he starved himself, he starved himself for me."

There was a long silence, then she spoke again. She was strangely calm.

"It was good of you to come," she said, "he always liked you, and it is lonely here for me. Servants are not much good on an emergency."

I did not think it necessary to tell her that the servants had all fled.

She covered his face up again. Her hands never shook, nor had her voice broken once when she spoke, but her quietness frightened me. It is more natural to see a woman weep, this one seemed to have no tears to shed.

We went back to the sitting-room. I knew she had much to do, and waited to help her. Besides, I could not leave her all alone with her dead.

Together we made all the necessary arrangements, which in the tropics have to be thought of in such indecent haste. Then she took out his papers, and began slowly going through them. I helped her in that too. There was nothing complicated in them, in fact they were only too simple.

His savings, over and above what they had just spent, amounted to about £15. His life insurance was for £200. I saw by some correspondence he had been just about to increase it. In the same way he had not yet been able to pay into the Widow's Fund, so his wife would receive no pension.

£215, and life to begin all over again! I glanced round the room. It was looking just the same as it had looked the night I dined with them. The prints on the wall, the Chinese curios, all the hundred and one little knick-knacks they had been slowly collecting, were unmoved. There were fresh flowers in the room, flowers evidently gathered that morning, and the piano was open—there was even a piece of music on it.

Within one week, I knew everything would be gone to the auctioneer's hammer. Mrs. Williams would probably have sailed for England, and life would be rolling on as usual, with its pitiless hand, obliterating all traces of this little home.

When the afternoon waned, I rose to go. I had orders to give about the funeral, besides I must fetch someone to be with her that night.

She was so calm, so self-reliant, my very sympathy seemed an intrusion, yet I felt I must know how the future stood for her.

"But you," I said, "what will you do now?"

"Oh I shall go back to Germany. I must live I suppose. I have had four weeks of happiness. Four weeks, four weeks! You think perhaps it was scarcely worth the journey out? Do you suppose would have missed these four weeks?"

For one moment her eyes gleamed, a faint flush rose in her pale cheeks, then it faded slowly, and the dull look settled down in her eyes once more.

"You must be tired," she said wearily, "I have kept you long over my affairs. I cannot thank you now, but when I am at work again and the memory of these few weeks comes back to me, I shall think of you as my friend and *his*."

"But," said I, something coming suddenly over my eyes, and preventing my seeing the woman whose hand I held "if you go back now, you won't make enough to live on, will you?"

"No, but I may make enough to starve on." This time she laughed.

My only Adventure.

By **RUSSELL HENRY.**

I AM now an old man, for I am nearly three score years and ten. I enjoy good health, thank God, and have managed to save a fair competency for my declining years. I have interesting grandchildren and a capital kitchen garden.

"It is high time, John, that you thought of retiring from practice. I am sick and tired of this dull country place." So says my wife, Jane. She is a good woman, but a little severe.

You see I am a plain country doctor. Sooner or later I suppose I must retire, but I never was quick in making up my mind, except in the treatment of difficult cases among my patients. Professionally I am prompt and firm. To this, together with the fact that there is no other medical man within seven miles of our village, I attribute a good deal of my success.

"Barling is not a brilliant man, but he is steady, and I believe he will do well in the country." This was the opinion of Dr. Cox to whom I was "dresser" at the hospital, and I remember we were all much pleased with the testimonial.

There was a certain Jane Strong on whom I had for some time cast the eyes of affection. The course of our true love ran as smoothly as possible. So we were married, Jane and I, and forty years ago I settled down in this village to the quiet life of a country doctor.

During all this time no adventure has ever befallen me but one, and that is perhaps the reason why I so frequently tell the story. "What a fuss you do make about a trifle, John!" my wife will say. "One would think nothing of any importance had ever happened to you, before or since, in your life." To which I usually reply with meekness: "Well, my dear, I really think nothing ever has."

It was a cold wet day in December. Our two boys, Tom and Dick, away at school, were expected home in the afternoon for the holidays. The girls had made the parlour festive with holly, and my wife had arranged a goose and plum pudding for dinner.

"You had better fix dinner for six," I said, "I cannot possibly be back any sooner. I have to go to Hicklebury Heath."

The name of this Heath was a mild terror to our household. It was a wild common of vast expanse, covered with patches of gorse and heather, in parts boggy and dangerous, with a long road running across the centre of it for upwards of two miles. Little green lanes diverging at intervals to the right and left, conducted to various huts and small cottages, which in spite of the wildness of the place were scattered pretty thickly over the common. The inmates of these habitations did not enjoy a very high reputation through the country. Squatters, hawkers and poachers, together with a few respectable labourers, formed the bulk of the population.

Away across the Heath, about six miles from our village, there had been built, within a year or so of the time of which I am speaking, some five or six substantial houses, each standing in its own grounds, with a fine garden and a splendid view. These houses were occupied by wealthy citizens from the large town three miles beyond, but as they had their own medical man from their own native town, such professional services as it fell to my lot to bestow on the denizens of the Heath were strictly confined to the pauper patients that my Union appointments required me to attend.

"Then you will not be home when the boys arrive," said Jane.

"I am afraid not, my dear. I have a long round and it is impossible. But make them welcome and I will be back as soon as I can."

Oh! what a damp, dreary, desolate day it was! But I went through my list without a single omission. At last, very wet and rather tired, I found myself on the Heath, my patients all seen and my duties over, and Bessie's little head turned towards her own corn and my goose.

"Sorry to keep you all waiting," I cried, as at half-past six I entered our little parlour, "but a professional man can never call his time his own. Well, boys, how are you both? Bless me, how the lads have grown! How's Dr. Thwackum?"

My memory vividly recalls the incidents of the next quarter of an hour. I was pleased to see the boys looking hearty and well, I was gratified with the kind attentions of my wife, and I will say this for Jane, that though a little querulous at times, she has always been most attentive to my bodily comforts. In a few minutes my hat was brushed with the wet on to keep up the gloss, my feet were encased in some dry socks and a pair of comfortable slippers, that had been

placed in readiness before the fire, an easy jacket was offered in the place of my professional frock coat, and my heavy cloak with its two-thick capes was carried off to the kitchen to be hung on the maiden till morning. And then, through the open door, came the most delicious and appetising fragrance of the roast goose. "Half spoilt," the cook declared, "all along of that 'Icklebury." But that which gave me most satisfaction was the sense of having done my duty, undeterred by the weather or the distance, and if the opinion of an old man is worth anything, I declare that all my life long the endeavour to do my duty has always been a great source of comfort and happiness to me, as I believe it will be to others, if they will only persevere as I have tried to do.

You may be sure it was not long before the goose was on the table, with stuffing, apple sauce and good gravy complete.

'Let us have a bottle of the old port, Mary," I said to our little waitress, "and drink the young gentlemen's health. Red seal. The second bin on the left; mind the step."

Our conversation was chiefly about the school, and I learnt, after the wine had been round, that Dr. Thwackum was not a bad sort, but a terrible hand at keeping fellows up to the mark, while Mrs. Thwackum was an old cat.

Need I say that as the rain pattered against the parlour window, and we drew our chairs round the fire, freshened with a large resinous log, and Jane snuffed the candles to make the well polished table in which she took much pride shine as brightly as it could, innocent of any cloth and laden only with the glasses and decanters and fruit, we were all supremely happy and contented?

At this moment our little maid came to the door, and announced the very common fact, that I was wanted.

"Who wants me?"

"Please sir, a boy."

"What boy?"

"Please sir, I don't know."

"Why didn't you ask him who he was, and what he wanted?"

"Please sir, I did, and he wouldn't say. Only as how he must see you."

It was plainly necessary for me to go to the surgery, and there sure enough I found a boy, such a boy, about eleven years of age, with a sharp cunning face, poorly clad, poorly fed I should say, sopping wet through and shivering before our little stove.

"Now, my boy, where do you come from, and what do you want?"

"Yer to coom at onst to see our Sal, oo's dying."

"Who? Where? I don't understand you."

"The fur side of 'Icklebury 'Eath. Sal Smith oo is."

For the moment my heart, a fairly brave one as a rule in all matters connected with the profession, sank within me. Hicklebury Heath again! That place seemed destined to be the bane of my existence. "Smith, Smith, what Smith?" I said. "I only know one Smith on the Heath, and her name is Betsy."

"Ah!" replied the boy, "that ain't she."

"Well, where does she live? Describe the house."

"I ain't a going to describe nothing, cos I can't, but I can take yer where oo is, and yer mun coom at onst."

"And have you come all alone in the rain to-night, from the other side of the Heath?"

"Ah!"

"You look precious cold and wet and miserable, boy, eh?"

"Ah!"

"Would you like something to eat and drink?"

"Ah! I could eat a bit o' summat, and I'd like a sop o' drink, but it must be sharp, fur I was 'tickler told to bring yer at onst."

"What a queer little chap! What's your name?"

"They ca' me Bob."

"Well then, Bob, look here. You dry yourself and warm yourself as well as you can by this stove, and they shall bring you something to eat and drink directly, and I'll be back in a minute or two."

My mind was fully made up that I must go. Never in my life had I refused a summons to attend the sick and dying; and, please God, as long as I had health and strength I never would. There was, however, one difficulty in the way. My practice was large enough to justify me in keeping two horses, but unfortunately my second horse had fallen lame the day before, and could not be taken on such a journey as this. Bessie had already had a long round, and she was by this time comfortably made up for the night, but "better," thought I, "that a horse should suffer than a woman die." There was only one thing to do and it must be done at once. I must rouse Bessie from the straw and harness her in the chaise, wrap Bob in a thick horsecloth to keep him dry, put him on the seat by my side, and once more drive through the rain and cold to that dreadful Hicklebury Heath.

"Who is this Sal?" asked my wife, as I re-entered the snug parlour, and told them about this unlucky call.

"I have not the least notion, my dear, but the boy says the woman is dying."

"I have no patience with them," said Jane, rather sharply, "they are always dying. If they cut their finger they are going to bleed to death. Wait till the morning,"

"So says inclination, my dear. But duty says, go now,"

"Let me go with you, father," cried Tom. "And me, too," added Dick.

"No, my boys, thank you," I replied. "It would only make more weight in the chaise, and more work for poor Bessie, who will have quite enough to do as it is. But I tell you what you may do. You may both of you come out and help me to harness."

Boys were far too common at our back door, for Bob to attract any particular notice, either from my family or the servants, so as soon as the little fellow had eaten and drunk his fill, and warmed himself as well as he could at the surgery stove, my lads wrapped him in a gigantic horse-cloth, and off we set without more ado.

It was not a night for much conversation, and Bessie was rather tired, but all things come to an end, and at last we arrived at "the far side."

"Now, my boy," I said, "look sharp and show me where to go."

"Yer mun turn down t'green lane just 'ere. No," he added, peering out of the horse-cloth into the darkness, "a bit further on."

"How far down does Mrs. Smith live, Bob?" I asked.

"Oh, not so fur. Oo ain't Missus Smith. Oo's Sal Smith. But t'road's terrible bad."

It seemed the wisest plan to cover Bessie up, and leave her where she was, tying her to a small tree that I could just discover in the hedge close by. So this we did, and then groped our way onwards in the darkness. Presently Bob, who had been taking the greatest care of me, said: "You mun coom t'other side of furze. Yon's Sal's." But I could see no house, hut, or hovel of any sort.

"Go on," I replied, "and be quick."

We skirted the furze bushes, and on some level grass the other side of them came suddenly upon two gipsy tents.

"You young rascal," I said, catching hold of Bob by the shoulder, "why didn't you tell me Sal Smith was a gipsy?"

"Yer would na' a coom, maybe."

The sound of our voices brought a tall woman to the outside of the larger tent.

"Good lad, Bob," she said, addressing the boy and taking no notice of me, "thou'rt just in time. But thee's welly starved wi' cold, I reckon, and clemmed and all. Fetch yon chap in, but I guess our Sal's too far gone, for the likes o' he to do any good."

The boy made no reply, but led me inside the tent.

On a torn rug lay a young girl, about seventeen years of age, as far as I could judge, evidently dying. By her side knelt an old woman, moistening the girl's lips from time to time with a feather dipped in some liquid that she held in a broken basin in her hand. A tallow candle aslant in the neck of a bottle stood on a small black box close by. The rain dripped rapidly through the soaked canvas of the well-torn tent, but was kept from the face of the dying girl by an old umbrella suspended from a hook above her head.

No one spoke as I stood for a few moments and watched the unfortunate patient I had been summoned so far to see, but an ill-looking mongrel growled at me from the opposite corner, resenting my intrusion as a personal affront.

"Has she been ill long?" I asked at length.

"Ah!" replied the old woman, without looking up, "oo's been going fur weeks."

"Why didn't you send for me before? I'm afraid I can do nothing now."

"Wall, we only coomed here a three-week to-morrow; and our Sal was not so bad like then, only as I allays knewed she was conscrumtive with her churchyard couf. It's only since morning oo's one so terrible bad, and her feyther off all t'week."

"Poor thing!"

"And a man as cuts turves out yon said as how if we sent Rob for Barling he'd come, and I reckon you be he."

"Yes, that's my name, but I see there's nothing to be done. doubt if she can live through the night."

"Ah! oo was a bonnie lass oo was, and a good lass and all. Her feyther will take on above a bit."

"Where is her father?"

"'Ow should I know? Up to no good, I reckon."

I stayed for about half-an-hour, and did what I could for the poor

girl, but indeed it was but little. She was in the last stage of consumption and could hardly speak above a whisper.

As a rule I am certainly of opinion that the cobbler should not go beyond his last, and however ill my patients may be, I consider I have fulfilled my duty when I have done my best for their bodies. But this seemed to me an exceptional case. I was touched by her forlorn condition. Poor child! it could not harm her to make a prayer by her side. Why should I conceal what I did? I do not feel in the least ashamed of it. I took her thin feeble hand in mine and I knelt by the side of the old crone, and I committed "our Sal" to the care of God. The mongrel had ceased to growl, but the rain dripped through the tent as fast as ever. Bob, worn out by his journey, was sound asleep in a corner. The tall woman stood just inside the entrance with folded arms and dark scowling eyes. The old crone rocked herself to and fro and gently moaned and wept. When I had finished I fancied I felt a slight pressure of the hand, and I know I heard a faint whisper which has lingered in my memory ever since, and often proved a great source of happiness to my heart—"thank you."

It was not difficult to find my way back to Bessie. The tall woman at the tent door lit another tallow candle, and stuck it in an old lanthorn. Then she walked in front of me and carefully showed the way round the gorse and up the green lane to my chaise and mare.

"Please, Master, what's to pay?" asked the woman, as I unfastened Bessie, and got into the chaise to drive away.

"Oh! nothing, nothing," I replied. How could I take a fee from such people?

"We'd rayther pay," she persisted.

"Nonsense. Never mind. Another day. You'll have enough to do with your money." I was thinking of a funeral surely close at hand.

"We'd a deal rather pay," she repeated, but I whipped up Bessie and drove on. I did not want their money, but I did want to get home.

All things considered, Bessie went very well, and when we had gained the foot of the hill, I loosened the reins and let her walk a bit. I lit a cigar and I began to think. I thought of the inscrutable decrees of Providence, that had surrounded me with so many blessings and doomed this fragile girl to die in a gipsy tent on a cold wet night on Hicklebury Heath.

Good little Bessie had dragged the chaise about three quarters of the way up the hill, when I began to wonder what o'clock it might be. The rain had ceased to fall, but the night was still dark. However, thought I, I shall be able to see the time by the light of my cigar, and I took out my watch and gave two or three vigorous puffs to ensure a good glow. This watch had been left to me, as a medical man, by an old maiden aunt. It was a repeater, chiming the quarters and striking the hours, with works of the best possible manufacture, and a case of thick solid gold. It was an excellent timekeeper, and cost very little in the way of repairs.

I had just opened the case and was holding up the dial to the end of the cigar to see the time, when Bessie suddenly stopped, and the next moment I was aware of a man at the horse's head, and two others by the side of the chaise.

"Now, guv'nor," said the biggest of the three, a fierce, rough-looking fellow, "out with the swag and look sharp."

In a moment it flashed across me that I was surrounded by thieves. I confess I felt very frightened and my heart began to thump in a most alarming manner. I do not pretend to be a particularly bold man, indeed I am naturally a little timid, except in professional matters. But now—why should I hesitate to acknowledge it?—I was thoroughly taken aback.

As soon as my heart would let me speak, "my good men," said I, "I have nothing for you. I never carry a purse, and I have only a few coppers in my pocket, which you are welcome to," I added, "if they are of any use. I am the doctor and I am just going home after visiting a patient, and really," I continued, for I was beginning to pluck up courage, "really I think it is too bad of three strong fellows like you to—"

"Now, guv'nor, stow that patter," interrupted the big man; "'and over that ere watch or I'll cut your ugly throat."

"But my good man," I began.

"Knife him, Bill, if he kicks or cackles," said one of his pals. Whereupon Bill, raising himself on the step of the chaise, made a desperate grab at my aunt's watch, which I still held in my hand, and before I could recover my astonishment he had torn it away from the ribbon by which it was fastened to my waistcoat, and all three men were hurrying off down the hill as fast as their legs could carry them.

For fully two minutes I sat stupefied in my chaise. The suddenness of the attack, the ferocious bearing of the men who had stolen the watch, the certainty that it was gone beyond recovery, and the fact that I had no clue whatever as to these robbers, all these things dazed and bewildered me beyond expression. Then throwing the stump of my cigar in the road, I jerked the reins and, with a heavy heart, made the best of my way home.

II.

It is a curious confession to make, but the thought which oppressed me most in connection with the whole matter was, how I should break the news to Jane. I felt she would be reproachful in looks if not in words, and it is hardly to be wondered at, therefore, if I made up my mind to say nothing about my loss that night.

But while I was undressing, Jane turned in the bed and said: "Mr. Barling, what is the right time by your aunt's watch?" I was so taken aback that I acknowledge I was guilty of a little deception. I went to the chest of drawers and pretended to consult the watch that was not there.

"It is nearly half-past two," I said, "and I am very tired."

"What time did you say?" repeated Jane.

"Close on half-past two," I replied, pretending once more to consult my watch.

"Thank you," drawled Jane, taking up a watch key and adjusting her own little china toy, which had the vaguest notions of regularity. And then she added more kindly: "Yes, I'm sure you must be tired. Make haste and get to bed."

I did not want much pressing to go to bed, but quite unavailing were all my efforts to go to sleep. For an hour or so I lay awake thinking over all the incidents of that eventful night, and when at last tired nature found her sweet restorer, in my dreams I was again with little Bob with his head wrapped up in a horse-cloth, and by our side sat the old crone waving a moistened feather in her hand; a moment more and the ferocious Bill was lying under a torn umbrella, whispering in a hollow voice: "thank you, thank you, thank you," and felt a faint pressure on my hand, which increased to a fierce grip,

and with a violent plunge and a scream of pain I started up in the bed and woke.

"What is the matter with you, Mr. Barling?"—it was the well-known voice of Jane—"you have kicked me twice, and hurt me very much indeed."

It was not till we were all assembled at the breakfast table, about nine o'clock, that I plucked up courage to tell the whole story of my visit to the gipsy tent on Hicklebury Heath, and my subsequent misfortune on the way home.

I had always through life been disposed to look on the bright side of things. I was vexed of course to have lost the watch, but there was a chance the robbers might be caught, and the watch recovered. There had been several robberies, (though not on the highway) in our neighbourhood during the winter, and the constabulary had very nearly caught one man, and had actually taken a woman into custody, though certainly she had turned out afterwards to be a perfectly innocent person. Still we were all rather proud of their activity, and I was not without hopes that they might do something in my case.

The boys, you may be sure, were vastly interested and excited. Tom had a great many questions to ask: What was the tall gipsy-woman like? Might they walk over after church and see if the poor girl was still alive—he was sure they could find the place? Why didn't I strike a match and hold it in front of the robber's face so that I should know him again? That's what he would have done.

Dick sat very silent in his absurdly short trousers, devoting himself to the sausages, "but I know what he is thinking of," said Tom. "He is thinking what awfully jolly stories there will be to tell in the dormitories when he goes back. Ain't you, Dick?"

"Well," said Dick, thoughtfully, "you see Father's stories are true, and most of the fellows' stories are only make-ups, and they are jolly bad too."

Jane was highly annoyed at the loss of the watch, but that which evidently pained her most, was my little deception in the bedroom about the time, after I had arrived home in the middle of the night.

It was not nice of me, I allow, to make believe I was consulting my aunt's watch. I do not pretend to defend my conduct. Only I was very upset and tired, and Jane did look so severe in her nightcap.

We were still discussing the events of the night, and the bells for morning church had just begun the first peal, when our little waitress

announced that the boy, Bob, had again presented himself in the surgery.

I guessed pretty well what the object of his visit was, though after his long tramp the previous evening, I scarcely thought it possible he could appear again so soon.

"Oo's gone," said the little fellow, as soon as he saw me. "Our Sal's dead." And he looked very sad and piteous indeed.

"Yes," I said, "I was afraid it would be so. I didn't think she'd long to live when I saw her. When did she die?"

"About 'arf an hour after yer left."

Good heavens! that was just about the time I was being robbed.

"And yer mun give me the stiffcut, and yer mun tak' this."

He handed me a very dirty little screw of paper, in which were carefully wrapped two greasy shillings.

"Yer mun tak' that. They'd rayther pay."

"No, my boy," said I, "I don't want the money."

"I was 'tickler told to say yer mun tak' it."

"Well, look here now, I'll give them both to you. You've been a good lad coming all this way twice. Here, I make you a present of them."

"Na," he said, drawing back, "they'll reckon I cribbed 'em, and they'll thrash me. You mun keep 'em and give me the stiffcut."

It was no use at all. The little fellow would not be persuaded, so after ordering him some more food—for he looked very pinched and thin—I sent him back again to the Heath, and I dropped the two greasy shillings into the poor box at our church porch, when I went to the afternoon service, as a kind of thankoffering that the ferocious Bill had not carried out his threat and cut my ugly throat.

On the following day the constables arrived, and at once instituted a very searching enquiry. I had to give a full description of the watch and the name and place of residence, together with the date of death of the maiden aunt from whom I had received it. It would promote the ends of justice if I would accompany them to the exact spot where the robbery took place. Here a little excitement was created by Dick discovering and picking up the remainder of my cigar, covered with mud. The head constable wiped this unlucky fragment with much care, and took possession of it as a piece of valuable evidence. Indeed, until this discovery was made, I experienced a kind of unpleasant feeling that he rather discredited my

story, but the cigar end served to divert suspicion from me. The official mind is bound to suspect somebody; a constable without a clue is evidently a person earning a salary under false pretences.

On our way back to the village, I was told that this was probably a put-up thing among the servants. Could I trust the waitress? What did I know about the antecedents of the cook?

I think I need scarcely say that we did not get much assistance from these men. They paid us several visits, and ate a good deal of our bread and cheese, and swallowed several pints of our best beer, but no tidings of my property was ever forthcoming, and before the boys went back to school, after the Christmas holidays, I had given up my aunt's watch as lost for good.

It took Jane a little time to recover from the mild deception I had practised on her, the impropriety of which I have already acknowledged. I think she felt a little hurt, perhaps justly, but she never was of an unforgiving disposition, and on my birthday, which happened a few weeks afterwards, she presented me with a very handsome silver watch. She had a little income of her own, about forty pounds a year in the funds, and she had devoted a portion of her half-yearly dividend to supply my wants.

"I could not go the length of gold, John," she said, "and if I had, you would probably lose it again. The works are only in a silver case, and, of course, there is no chiming like there was in your aunt's watch. I only ask if you do meet with a loss again, that the first thing you will do is to tell your wife. There is no one loves you as much as I do, John." And her lip began to quiver.

I was overcome at once, and I kissed her and thanked her very much, and from that day to this she has always known all my secrets.

Well, time rolled on, the sweet summer season came and went, the number of my patients steadily increased, and I was a happy, busy, and prosperous man. Autumn passed over us, and once more we began to look forward to the return of Tom and Dick for the Christmas holidays.

The eventful day at last arrived, and Tom seemed much elated at the prospect of having left school for good, and Dick a little depressed at the prospect of going back without Tom. But we were a happy, merry party that evening, when the little waitress had removed the cloth and placed the fruit and wine on Jane's resplendent mahogany.

"Father," said Tom, as he cracked his sixteenth nut, "do you re-

member this day last year, what a beastly night it was, and about your going to the gipsy tent and being robbed of your watch as you came up Haversham Hill?"

"Certainly, my boy; I don't think I'm very likely to forget it."

"What a lark it would be if you had to go out in the same way to-night!" added Dick.

"Well, I can't say I view it exactly in the light of a lark," I replied.

"But it's not at all likely, is it father?" asked Tom.

"Strange to say," I replied, "it's not at all improbable. I don't mean that I shall be sent for to see another gipsy girl, or that I shall be robbed of another watch, but it is quite likely that I may be called to-night to Hicklebury Heath. I have lately got a new patient, Major Saunders, at Broomfields, one of the large houses the other side of the Heath, and Mrs. Saunders has a little business on hand that may require my assistance at any moment. They have quarrelled with Hicks, and now employ me."

"It's all very well going to see people who can afford to pay," said Jane, "but really I cannot see why you should be at the beck and call of paupers at all hours of the night and in all weathers."

"My dear," I said, "you and I do not agree in this matter, but I have always felt it is impossible to make a distinction."

"Anyhow, it is very nice of father, isn't it, mother?" said Tom.

"Yes, Tom, but your father is a great deal too good-natured."

As Jane said these words, there was the sound of a horse's hoofs in the road, and immediately after there was a ring at the surgery bell.

"Please, sir," said the little waitress, entering the snug parlour, "There's Major Saunders' groom come a 'orseback, and please, sir, will you go at once to Mrs. Saunders, at Broomfields."

"How curious! What a coincidence! Well, father, isn't it odd? May I come with you? May I?"

"It certainly is rather curious," I said, rising from my comfortable armchair. "Mary, my compliments, and I'll come immediately. But I fully expected to be called either to-night or to-morrow. Yes, Tom, you may come with me; I shall be glad of your company. Not you, Dick, I think; you stay and talk to your mother. Harness Bessie; she's not been out to-day."

It was a beautiful, bright, starlight night. Tom and I enjoyed the drive amazingly. We conversed upon all kinds of subjects, and I was glad to find that he was an intelligent and thoughtful lad.

We reached Broomfields a little after ten o'clock, and the interesting event had already taken place, about a quarter of an hour before. Such services as it was necessary for me to render did not occupy a great length of time. Before eleven o'clock I was in the drawing-room, congratulating the Major on his first son! and we sent out for Tom, and I introduced him to the Major, who thought him a fine, gentlemanly lad, as indeed he was, and we had glasses of champagne and drank the baby's health. Another short visit upstairs, and then we said "Good-night," and set off back again for home.

"I suppose, father," said Tom, as we came to Haversham Hill, and Bessie, as usual, began to walk, "you have never heard anything more of your watch."

"Nothing whatever," I replied, "and I never shall."

"It seems a pity, too," said Tom; "such a fine watch! What a shame it is that people should be allowed to do wicked things and escape!"

"In some way or other," I said, "as long as the world lasts, I expect the strong will always prey upon the weak."

"What muffs those constables were!"

"Well, certainly, they were not very acute. But, after all, they had absolutely no clue whatever. It was pure guess work from beginning to end."

We sat in silence for some moments longer, and then occurred the strangest thing that has ever happened to me in all my life, and I think you will confess it was a very strange thing, indeed, when you have heard the story.

We had just reached, as nearly as I could judge, the exact spot where I had been stopped and robbed last year, when a big, rough-looking fellow stepped out of the cover of the hedge and laid his hand on Bessie's rein. I was terribly frightened, and I believe I began to tremble. Tom, on the contrary, was quite calm and collected, and turning round to me in the chaise, he put his lips to my ear and whispered: "Bill!"

"Be this Barling's shay?" said a gruff voice from the neighbourhood of Bessie's head.

"Yes," answered Tom quite boldly, "this is Doctor Barling, and I'm his son. Now what do you want, my man?"

I was absolutely amazed at Tom's pluck, and his voice and manner served to encourage me.

"I thowt it was you," said the big man, leaving Bessie's head and coming to the side of the chaise. "I've looked out for yer many's the time, but I niver ketcht yer till now. Just stay a bit, for I've summat to say. I won't 'urt a hair of your 'ead, and I'll tak' doosid good care none o' my pals does neither. Doctor Barling, was you the gent as lost a watch 'ere on this werry 'ill, at this werry spot, about this time last year?"

"I was," I replied, "and I believe you were one of the blackguards who robbed me." For you see I was plucking up courage a bit, and Tom was with me, and the fellow was alone. Then I suddenly thought there might be any number of accomplices behind the hedge, and a whistle would bring them all on us at once.

"But never mind," I added, "we'd better drive on now. It's getting late. Good-night." And I whipped up Bessie, who sprang forward at once.

"Hold," he cried, seizing the rein and pulling Bessie violently across the road. "I'll not let thee go in this fashion. Now I've found thee I'll 'ave my say. Dr. Barling, where had yer bin the night I robbed yer?"

"I had been to see a poor gipsy girl, dying of consumption on Hicklebury Heath."

"I knowed it," he said, in a voice much softened and subdued. "I knowed it was the same man directly I 'eared. That girl was my daughter, my pretty Sal, God help her, and yer took that boy in and yer guv 'im meat and a sop o' drink, and yer druv 'im back in yer own shay, with a 'orsecloth round his yed to keep out the cold and wet, and yer made a bit of a prayer like alongside of our Sal, and yer wouldn'a take no pay till they forced yer, and—God forgive me for a big, wicked brute—'ere's yer watch." With that he thrust my aunt's watch on to my lap, caught hold of my hand, and looked earnestly in my face. "Yer may peach on me, Dr. Barling, if yer've a mind, but somehow I dinna think yer will. Anyways I says to yer same as my lass said: 'Thank yer.'"

Before I could recover my astonishment, or make any reply, ferocious Bill was gone. Tom said he dashed through a gap in the hedge and hurried away across the field.

"Jane, my dear," said I, as I entered our bedroom half-an-hour later, where my wife and her formidable night-cap awaited my arrival, "I promised on my last birthday never to have a secret from you again."

"Good gracious, Mr. Barling, John, you've never let yourself be robbed a second time? Surely you've not lost my silver watch? And Tom with you besides."

"Surely not," I replied. "So far from having lost your silver watch, I have actually recovered aunt's gold watch of which I was robbed last year." And then I told her all that had happened to us on the way home, and for a long time she was as proud of the story as I was. I still consider it a very strange thing, and having taken place just at Christmas time, when the kinder feelings of our nature are more easily called forth, it has always seemed to me to show that such feelings are not entirely misplaced, for there is some good, if you can only find it, even in the most worthless and depraved characters.

But perhaps Jane is now right in considering that it is not much of a story after all. If so, you must forgive me for making so much of it, on the ground that through a rather long and uneventful life, this has been my only adventure.

A Meet of the Grantham Hounds.

By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD,

Author of "FROM BIRTH TO DIAMOND JUBILEE," "LADY HOP
PICKERS OF SELBORNE," etc., etc.

It was a pleasant February morning, when General Mowbray turned out of his lodge gates to go to a meet of the Grantham Foxhounds. His "get up" was perfection, from the glossy shine of his horse, to his own hunting attire, and there was a certain gleam of satisfaction on his stern face, as a sweet fresh wind brushed his cheek; and the morning sun touched up his iron grey moustache and cold blue eye.

There was however no satisfaction on the face of his only child, Elsie,—a lovely girl of nineteen—who was standing at one of the breakfast-room windows, gazing out on the carriage drive before the door. There was a decided frown upon her face, and although she seemed to be looking at a spirited pair of ponies in a low carriage, held by a groom, in reality her thoughts were far away.

"Mother," she said fretfully, as Mrs. Mowbray came into the room, plump and fair, and well wrapped up in furs, "Mother I can't see why I am forbidden to ride after hounds, many girls in the county do, but father is always stern and cross now, ever since that craze about marrying me to Sir Walter entered his head. However, I will never marry Sir Walter. Once, Jock was considered good enough for me, but since the Farquarsons have lost so much money, and Sir Walter has made himself so ridiculous about me, poor Jock is of no account."

A spot of bright, deep colour came into Mrs. Mowbray's cheek, as she laid her hand on her daughter's shoulder. "Elsie," she said, "never again speak of your father in that tone, never at least to me, he is the best of fathers, and best of men. And pray, Elsie, why do you call young Farquarson Jock?"

"All his brothers and sisters call him Jock, you know," replied the girl sullenly.

"Well you are not his sister"—with a pleasant smile. "See what a lovely morning; we shall have a pleasant drive and be in time to see the hounds throw off, if we are quick. Come, my darling, no clouds on such a day." Then catching sight of a tremble in the girl's lips and a tear in her eye, the mother's heart told her there was something deeper than she had imagined. "Elsie," began Mrs. Mowbray tenderly and slowly, "you have been chafed and worried lately, but think no hard thoughts of your father, and rest assured you shall never be forced into marrying anyone, and besides, how could father and I part with our little girl?"

This touch of sympathy went straight to the girl's heart. She pressed her lips on her mother's gloved hand, cheerfully crossed the hall, and springing down the steps she entered the carriage, and prepared to enjoy her drive and the Grantham Meet.

It was a lovely February morning with a light, fresh wind blowing. There was a certain soft promise of spring in the air, as well as in the ecstatic song of birds, the swelling buds, and a tinge of tender green just showing itself here and there. The ponies trotted gaily on, and the girl's spirits rose. Her life after all she thought was a very happy one, and this trouble about Jock would most probably pass like a summer cloud. And anyhow she dearly loved her father.

The meet on Luxton Down was a pretty sight, with a crowd of

scarlet coats seen through the bare trees, and thrown into fine relief by the dark green colour of the stunted yews, and then there was the golden sunshine, falling over the mossy turf.

"Oh, mother, what a pretty sight!" exclaimed Elsie, as the ponies were reined up, and she watched the animated scene. "Doesn't he look handsome?" the girl went on in a lower tone, and with a heightened colour, as a young fellow was seen making his way rapidly towards them. But the mother's eyes were fixed on a grand, stern looking soldier, with a grey moustache and keen blue eye. "Yes, he is a king amongst men," she emphatically said.

Elsie turned round and glanced at Mrs. Mowbray, struck by the warmth of her tone—and then she saw the direction of her mother's eyes—and smiled.

Ah! if she had known the pain and passion of the past, could she only have guessed the tragedy which had once come into the lives of those so dear to her, she would not have wondered. But Elsie knew nothing of a night long years before, where her mother (a young orphan girl), driven mad by being forced to become engaged to a bad man because of his money, stood at night on one of the great London bridges, looking into the sullen depths of the Thames, and thinking to end all her misery in one wild plunge. Elsie never felt the awful despair which had seized upon her mother when the cold waters closing over her head, had brought her to her senses and told her she was lost. Then followed the exquisite relief and joy of being saved by the great and good man who was now her husband, and with whom she had known perfect happiness. Elsie however knew nothing of all this, and so she smiled.

Young Farquarson came up to the carriage with a beaming look upon his handsome face.

"Not with the hounds, Hugh?" calmly remarked Mrs. Mowbray, shaking hands.

"No—I thought—well you know it is a change once in a way," stammered the young man in some confusion. Be it remarked, his only reason for not hunting lay in the hope that he should see more of Elsie. Suddenly he turned towards Mrs. Mowbray and eagerly said, "The hounds are just going to throw off, do trust Elsie to me for a few minutes, I could show her such a pretty sight from yonder ridge."

His crimsoning face was irresistibly pleading, and the girl's "Oh, mother, may I?" with sparkling eyes and rosy flush on the round fair cheek, carried the day.

For once Mrs. Mowbray forgot her soldier. "Well, you must not be long, dear, for the ponies will be restive, and she watched the two young people walk off with rather an unquiet feeling in her heart.

"Oh, this is charming, positively delightful," exclaimed Elsie, when they had gained the crest of the hill. "See the scarlet coats," she went on softly clapping her hands. "How fast the horses go!" Presently she added in a disappointed tone, "oh, they are going away, they will soon be gone, the scarlet is fading in the distance, oh! what a pity!"

"Never mind, Elsie," said young Farquarson give me your hand, I will help you up the brow of the next hill, that will give us a splendid view, and, just for once, surely your mother won't mind, and I am certain those blessed ponies can stand awhile." Her own heart and his eager pleading face decided her; although she looked back with some compunction to where her mother—now a speck in the distance—was patiently waiting—yet, all the same, she went with Hugh Farquarson.

After this there followed a blissful season. Time flew unheeded by, as the young people—now grown reckless—climbed from point to point, eager, happy, and all the time Hugh held his companion's soft little hand within his own. At last they reached a heathery dell, with a sloping bank on one side and a clump of trees on the other.

"Oh! I know where we are now," cried Elsie, as she passed on first. "This is Moss Dell, but turning round she added, "the place is uncanny, although it is so beautiful, for here my great-grandfather was thrown from his horse while hunting, and killed on the spot; it makes me shudder only to think of it, but what, what is it Jock?" she went on excitedly as she saw a kind of horror gathering in the young fellow's eyes. But he would not let her turn round, he suddenly caught and held her fast.

"Elsie, stop, for God's sake, stop. I must go into the dell first, I must." But at that instant she caught sight of a gleam of scarlet, and throwing off his detaining hand, she flew into the dell and with a wild scream threw herself by the side of a prostrate figure on the ground.

Hugh never forgot the sight which met his eyes as he followed her. General Mowbray was lying on the turf, having been thrown from his horse, with one leg doubled under him, and with his stern white face turned up to the sky, looking as cold and lifeless as marble. The ashy hue of his face was accentuated by the scarlet coat he wore. And what of Elsie? She was lying a crushed heap beside him and moaning. Oh! father, father, speak to me, just one word, one little word; oh, father, father."

A sharp spasm of pain crossed General Mowbray's face, when his child's voice was first heard. By this Jock could tell he was yet alive.

And then, all at once, a change passed over Hugh Farquarson. Up to this time he had been a good-natured, thoughtless, careless boy—now he became a man. Rapidly taking General Mowbray's hunting flask from his pocket, he forced, with great difficulty, a few drops of brandy into his mouth. Then he raised Elsie from the ground, who trembled all over, and looked piteously up into his face. Even in her distress, she saw a change in him; Jock, she felt, was no longer her humble slave, but her master.

"Elsie, my darling," he said tenderly, but firmly, "you must rouse yourself—you *must*. Our duty is not to think of ourselves, but of him. He is not dead, my dear," he went on soothingly, "but he must be got home at once. I can go through hedges and over hills, and be back in no time; you cannot, and, therefore, I must go, and you must stay beside him. Oh! Elsie, don't tremble so, I shall soon be back." But for answer, she tightened her hold on his arm, and moaned. "Oh! Jock, don't leave me, I am so frightened—so very frightened."

Hugh looked into her eyes and gently said. "Elsie, you know I would give my life for you, but I dare not think even of you now—only of your father. Your duty is to stay beside him, mine to get help. Some day you will be so thankful to feel you did your best for him, indeed—indeed you will."

His earnestness roused the girl at last. She knelt beside her father, and, under Hugh's direction, got a few drops of brandy into his mouth.

"God bless and keep you, dear," said Jock, while he pressed a kiss upon her forehead, and then he was gone.

Elsie listened to the crackling of some twigs in the hedge, through

which Jock was forcing his way in order to take a short cut to Grantham Park ; then silence fell and she was alone.

Once more, in her utter loneliness, horrible fears assailed her. The beating of her heart seemed to fill the gloomy dell. She dreaded to look at her father, and her eyes went round and round the place, noticing every tiny object. She looked at a sweet little redbreast, singing his cheerful song on a bough close by, and some little rabbits skurrying home to their burrows with their little white tails. She noticed some clusters of primroses, the buds just beginning to flush into a pale yellow, from amidst their crinkled leaves. These, and a hundred little insignificant things like them, were stamped upon her memory for ever.

At length, a slight moan from General Mowbray made the girl start, and brought her to herself. From that time she knelt beside her father, and drop by drop administered the stimulant. But the minutes passed as hours. Would Jock never come ?

Elsie Mowbray knew nothing of illness. Sickness and death had never crossed their happy threshold, but, somehow, she felt now that her father would die. She looked at the dear familiar face, and remembered what she had said of him only that morning. "Oh, only let him get well" was her agonized thought. "Jock must go—yes, dear old Jock must be sacrificed if the thought of him would trouble her father." But, alas! her father would never get well; even now a grey shadow was stealing over his face. She thought of lonely watchers by dying beds; she thought of Dalkeith, slowly bleeding to death on the mountain side, in the grey of the early morning, his friend beside him, yet helpless to save. Elsie glanced up at the sky. How blue and unconcerned the heavens looked. There seemed no pity there for her—and yet somewhere up above the blue sky there was a pitying Father, surely there was. Elsie had said many prayers in her short life, but had never really prayed, but now down on the heathery turf she knelt, with hands clasped and tearful eyes upraised, and under the stress and tumult of her trouble, she prayed indeed.

The next minute there came a slight sound from General Mowbray, and, to the girl's exceeding surprise, his eyes unclosed, and full of sorrow, and of suffering, were fixed upon her face. "Poor little girl," he said slowly, and with exceeding difficulty.

"Father, darling, do you suffer much?" she softly whispered, with one quick sob.

"I am a soldier, dear," he made answer, and then seemed to lapse into unconsciousness. Once more, however, he roused up, and whispered faintly, "Elsie, if—remember you must be everthing to *her*." Then he added, more faintly still, "Jock is a good lad," and tried to say something more, but his stiffened lips refused to move.

Just at this crisis, to Elsie's great joy, Hugh Farquarson appeared with plenty of help and a doctor, and General Mowbray was soon very carefully and tenderly removed to his own home.

As they neared the familiar house, Elsie, above all things, dreaded to meet her mother. All her life she had remembered Mrs. Mowbray as plump, pretty, adored by her husband, and without a touch of care. How would this cherished mother—the girl asked herself—bear this, her first and bitterest trouble?

Ah! the child would never know of the storms which had swept across her mother's early path in life. Sorrow and sickness were to her no new companions.

Elsie never forgot the first look of her mother's face.

Mrs. Mowbray was white as death, with anguish in her eyes, but perfectly calm and composed. They laid him on his own bed, and she bent over him. He raised his weary and suffering eyes—appealingly as it seemed—to her face. Answering that look in his eyes, she kissed him solemnly on the lips, and softly said, "I don't think it has come, my Maurice, but if so, I shall soon follow."

That was all, they each understood the other, and ineffable peace lay between them.

Then came an awful time for Elsie Mowbray—nurses, doctors, consultations, and no hope, as it seemed. Mrs. Mowbray never left her husband's side, except, indeed, once every day, to whisper what words of comfort she could to the frightened Elsie, and press the child to her aching heart.

For the most part, Elsie sat outside her father's door with her cheek leaning on the head of Lion, General Mowbray's grand St. Bernard. The girl and the dog were of one mind. They were both real mourners, and, after a fashion, they comforted each other.

Hugh Farquarson came often to the house, but after the first time, Elsie never saw him. "Father might not like it," was her thought, although deep down in her weary heart, she kept the memory of those words, "Jock is a good lad."

Time passed on, and at last there came a day—a day to stand out in Elsie's recollection for ever—when Mrs. Mowbray came to her with hopeful tidings. It was a wild, boisterous afternoon, when the wind swept round the house, and sent large rain-drops pattering against the windows. Elsie was crouching over the drawing-room fire, with Lion beside her, and both looked dreary and miserable. Suddenly the door was softly opened, and Mrs. Mowbray entered. She came swiftly down the long room, with arms outstretched, and wan, but radiant, face. The night of terror was over, the day had begun to dawn.

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It was a lovely June evening, the Westering sun sent golden shafts of light over the smoothly-shaven lawns and gay flower-beds at Grantham House. General Mowbray, in all the delicious languor of convalescence, was reclining in an easy chair under a large tulip tree. His wife sat beside him, one hand in his, and her sweet face beaming with joy and thankfulness. Elsie sat on the lawn at their feet, in a white dress, with roses at her throat. She was busily engaged in trying to tie a broad blue ribbon round Lion's neck. The dog, however, resisted, and laid his great head on his master's knee.

"Lion doesn't seem easy in his mind; he is above such flipperies," remarked General Mowbray.

"Yes, father dear, but he does not yet understand; watch while I tell him." So saying, she put her arm around the great dog's neck, and whispered in his ear, "I am dressing you up with ribbons, Lion dear, because father is well again, and is sitting out on the lawn for the first time to-day."

The animal's fine eyes were fixed earnestly on her as she spoke, and when General Mowbray's name was mentioned, he looked anxiously towards his master, and wagged his banner of a tail, but made no further resistance.

"Who is that coming across the park?" asked General Mowbray. "Surely I know the style of young man."

The colour flushed hotly in Elsie's cheeks. "I think it is Hugh Farquarson," she answered quietly.

"Why do you avoid Jock now, and give him the cold shoulder on every possible occasion?"

"Father, you know," she answered with trembling lips.

General Mowbray sat upright in his chair. "Elsie, you thought

I was unconscious when Jock left you that day, but I heard every word—every word, my child.” And as Jock neared the group, he said, “Take her Jock, and God bless you both.”

Lion gave three taps with his great tail on the grass at this, and joy filled every heart.

Is the C. I. D. a Failure?

By HALBORO DENHAM.

ENGLISH history when investigated by the curious student who explores its by-paths and does not eschew the details of ambassadorial dispatches, will be found to contain plenty of tragic dramas, the real facts of which have never been fully explained. Some of these will probably remain like the mystery of the Iron Mask, state secrets to the end of time. The popular idea that Edward the Second was barbarously assassinated in Berkeley Castle by some ruffians in the hire of Queen Isabella, and her lover, looks on the face of it a correct one. But if guilt was limited among so few, why was it that when, years after Mortimer's execution, his agents were given up by a foreign government, they were beheaded at sea? It is most likely that Mortimer had numerous accomplices among the English aristocracy, and these dreaded the revelations which the returning cut-throats might make. Whatever the motive, it is beyond doubt that this method of execution was adopted in this case, and the instigators could congratulate themselves on more success than Hamlet's uncle met within a similar design. Then much later in our annals occurred the disappearance of Edward the Fifth and his brother the Duke of York. Richard the Third was universally accused of having procured their murder, and has ever since figured in the minds of the masses as a model type of the wicked uncle. It should be remembered, however, that the record of this villiany, if he ever perpetrated it, was penned after his death and under the influence of his triumphant enemies. It is a strange thing that when, during the reign of the first Tudor sovereign, some men came forward to tell the story of the killing of

the two young princes, no steps were taken to find the bodies. Horace Walpole has dealt with the subject in his "Historic Doubts," but the whole story is wrapped in mystery, and the impartial reader who analyses the life and character of the last of the Plantagenets, will say that as a king and a man he compares very favourably with his successor.

Much material for surmise exists in the narrative of the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower of London during the reign of James the First. The victim had incurred the hatred of the Countess of Somerset, who, along with her husband and sundry others, was convicted of poisoning him. This much is clear, but when we are tempted to ask why the two principals were pardoned, and only *their* agents executed, it is not easy to find any way out of the difficulty except one—they *knew too much* about their despicable master's past. There was plenty of publicity as it was about the case. The whole kingdom rung with it. A state prisoner slowly done to death by His Majesty's own minion! Tongues were wagging, a chemist's lad had blabbed enough, and Somerset might, in desperation, reveal more, and so he and his countess went to linger out the rest of their married life in country exile pardoned by the wretched monarch who, despite his connection with "the Authorised Version," was probably the worst who ever sat on the English throne.

If the stones of the Tower dungeons could tell the story of all those who have languished in prison there, what a grim and barbarous record it would be! Secret murder in all probability settled the fate of many a royal victim, and the rack was always busy, and away on yonder bridge gates heads were generally plentiful. Murder, torture and mutilation was the royal method through the centuries until not a bit too soon the Stuarts were expelled. With the revolution absolutism finally gave way to government by party majority, and whilst this system, corrupt as it undoubtedly was, flourished during the last century, certain institutions developed from small beginnings until they have in the present become known as the Home Office, Bow Street and Scotland Yard. All three have to do with the investigation or suppression of crime, but it is with the success or failure of the last that we are the most particularly concerned just now.

Now there can be very little question that the security of life and property has been greatly increased under modern conditions of

police organisation, but it is very much open to doubt whether the detective system at the command of the Home Office has made any progress in efficiency during the past thirty or forty years. In other words the police as a detective body do not show anything like the ability that they do in their preventive duties. The streets are patrolled, the traffic is regulated, and rowdyism suppressed. If an expert criminal sets his mind on circumventing the police precautions, he has a host of chances against him, and given success in a huge commercial fraud, he has still his angry and living victims to reckon with besides the activity of Scotland yard. But if he decides to make "Murder a Fine Art," the statistics of the last thirty years would seem to show that the odds are against his detection and apprehension.

It may be urged in excuse for startling shortcomings which have been revealed from time to time that the police being ordinary human beings, have yielded to extraordinary temptation. This might be some palliation were the officer an ordinary human being—but he is not—he is invested with powers when on duty, which the average citizen does not possess. "Cæsar's wife should be above suspicion," and the administrators and agents of the law from the judges downwards should be free from taint. That it has not always been so we unfortunately know. In the last century Jonathan Wild the thief taker, came to grief for his double dealing, and the infamous wretch was deservedly hanged. In the present reign a knot of trusted detectives were actually found to be in the pay of the perpetrators of colossal frauds. A noted judge has even been found dead in a house of ill fame. Such things as these, to quote only two or three instances, are regrettable, but let us hope and believe rare. What we are afraid is not so rare is a blundering and clumsiness in the arrangements for the detection of the more intricate forms of crime, and more especially murder.

Of course mysteries of this kind defying solution will in a sense never cease to crop up from time to time, and to linger long afterwards as the constantly occurring topic of conversation in the tap-room or parlour of the old country inn, which the criminal or his victim once perhaps frequented. To this day the evil deeds of the Rugeley poisoner, Palmer, are talked over in many a Midland ingle nook, with a frequency which comes not only from local associations, but is also prompted by the mystery as to the real

number of his victims. The impression his conviction created at the time was stupendous, and the extent of the public interest in the final stage of the miscreant's career, may be imagined from the fact that sixty thousand persons are believed to have attended his execution as spectators. A battery of horse artillery on the march were due to halt for the night at Lichfield, but such was the eagerness of officers and men to witness the hanging next morning, that they pushed on, so as to be in time for the grim scene at Stafford. Small wonder then that Palmer's story is, despite the lapse of forty, years still vividly recalled. It is doubtful, however, whether this arch-poisoner, if he had not been in a desperate hurry to finish his last victim, Cook, would ever have been run to earth. It was his own blunder which undid him, and even his attempt after suspicion had been aroused, to tamper with the sealed jars, containing the contents of Cook's stomach for analysis failed through no police precautions. The number of people done to death by him will never be accurately known, and remains a matter of local surmise for good and all. The whole career of the man is an illustration of how long the deepest villainy can go on unchecked and unsuspected, and the story of the jars is, as Dr. Taylor points out in his great work on *Medical Jurisprudence*, a warning that the greatest care is necessary to prevent interested parties having access to what may prove to be damning *post-mortem* evidence of guilt.

A notable case of such successful tampering with the results of medical research—that is with the contents of the stomach of the victim prior to analysis—did actually occur many years ago in Paris. One particular jar was missing, and the result in the long run was that the insurance companies had to pay heavy sums to an individual, who had scientific skill and presence of mind enough, not only to conceal the evidence of his crime, but also to judge with the greatest accuracy where to look for the traces of the poison he had himself administered. These two examples of negligence on the part of the authorities responsible for criminal investigation of the most serious kind are historical because they are known. It is only reasonable to infer that similar things have happened before and since.

A learned judge on circuit had occasion to remark, not very long ago, that in his opinion a great many children are annually done to death for the sake of the paltry sums of insurance money secured

by the criminals. Startling as was this deliberately expressed conviction, its gravity was not lessened, when the judge further proceeded to state, than in a great percentage of these cases of infanticide, it is to be feared guilt is not only never brought home, but never even suspected. An opinion of this kind coming from the quarter it did, had weight and authority well calculated to arouse public alarm and awaken official activity, but we are not aware that any special measures have been taken, except by the London County Council to act on the judicial hint, nor have we sufficient grounds for supposing that a searching investigation by a Royal Commission would reveal an improved state of things as far as the methods of the insurance companies go. Ever since the days of Wainwright, the infamous poisoner of *London Magazine* notoriety, insurance money has had much to do with crime, and he has doubtless since had scores of imitators still more successful because suspicion has never even fallen on them. Wainwright, indeed, was never convicted on the capital charge, the law having to content itself with transporting him for forgery in connection with insurance papers.

So much for one class of what there is only too much reason to consider as largely consisting of undiscovered crimes. But there are others of a more dramatic character occurring among us from time to time with such terrible frequency, as to induce the belief that the proverb "murder will out" is a complete fallacy, and the Scotland Yard system a lamentable failure. In truth it looks as if undetected miscreants form the great majority of manslaughterers, and for the nervous persons who would seek refuge on a chair at the first sight of an enterprising mouse, it is by no means re-assuring to reflect that they may at any moment be rubbing shoulders in a bus or railway carriage with the agent of one or more of the many dark deeds which have horrified people of late years.

We have among us a vast army of criminals to counteract whose schemes we have an imposing force of many thousands of zealous and intelligent police officers, impelled by one common aim, the detection and suppression of offences against the law. Now let us see how this counter criminal organisation works. The centre and headquarters of its brain power is supposed to be Scotland Yard, and provided things are worked efficiently by that department fair results might be expected. The statistics of unsolved murder show

however a long series of utter failures. If we take a period covering roughly the last quarter of a century, and confine our examination to cases occurring in London, or its vicinity, we find that it is a comparatively easy matter to catalogue off-hand some forty murders, for which there has been no conviction from the killing of Maria Clouson at Shooters Hill in 1871 down to the slaying of Miss Camp the other day in a railway carriage, on the London and South-Western line.

The mystery of Shooters Hill, also known as the Eltham murder, was a truly remarkable one. The victim was a young woman, who had been a servant at the house of Mr. Pook, a Greenwich Bookseller. When found in a dying condition, the only words she uttered were "Oh! my poor head!" Life then left her, and the assassin's work was complete. The unfortunate girl had had her head battered in with a hammer, selected and bought perhaps by someone who had read De Quincey's blood curdling narrative of the wholesale massacres in Ratcliff Highway eighty years ago. A hammer was found near the scene of the tragedy, and Mr. Pook's son was arrested and tried on the capital charge. It was alleged that he had bought the hammer, and that a whistle found simultaneously was one which he had been in the habit of using for summoning his sweethearts. The fact that the girl was several months advanced in pregnancy, was one important circumstance which helped at the time to throw suspicion on young Pook, who was however acquitted by a popular verdict. We have selected this memorable trial for the beginning of what we have called "a series of failures," not simply because the establishment of Pook's innocence, left the case an unsolved problem, but rather because it would almost appear as if the break down of the prosecution had had a permanently discouraging effect on Scotland Yard. In one word, excessive caution has perhaps operated as unfavourably of later years, as over zeal did in the attempt to hang young Pook. The possibility of this being the case is rendered the more likely by a consideration of the events surrounding another terrible tragedy which startled London the following year.

On the morning of Christmas Day, 1872, a woman of the unfortunate class, named Harriett Buswell, was found dead in her room, at 12, Great Coram Street, with her throat cut from ear to ear. A

man had been seen to enter the house with her the night before but the landlady had not clearly distinguished him in the dimly-lit hall. A neighbouring greengrocer had also, it appears, seen the pair, and sold them fruit. In addition, a servant-girl at a house close by stated that she had noticed a man leave there at an early hour on Christmas Day. Suspicion pointed to some foreigner, and the foreign hotels were ransacked in search of the assassin, who had done his fell work so swiftly and silently, and vanished beyond ken. Great was the sensation experienced, when the chaplain of a German emigrant ship was ultimately arrested at Ramsgate and charged before the magistrate, Mr. Vaughan, in London, with the murder of Harriet Buswell.

In the first instance, the assistant surgeon of the ship (which had put into Ramsgate for repairs) was detained, and the witnesses were brought from London to identify him as the man they had seen with the murdered woman. This they failed to do, but, to the astonishment of everybody, pointed out the chaplain, Doctor Hessel. The servant girl and the greengrocer were positive on the subject, and a waiter at a German hotel in London was equally certain that Doctor Hessel was in London on the night of the tragedy. After repeated remands, the prisoner was discharged, the magistrate remarking that it was clearly a case of mistaken identity.

During the next few years, two localities in the neighbourhood of Great Coram Street were distinguished by crimes, which acquired for the district an unenviable notoriety; and again in every single case the victim was a woman. These two murder haunts were Euston Square and Burton Crescent, but it was at the latter place that the most puzzling mystery confronted the police. This was the discovery, in the shrubbery of the Crescent, of the mutilated remains of an unknown woman. We have it on the authority of the late Mr. Montague Williams, that for several weeks no exertion was spared by the Scotland Yard authorities in their efforts to solve the riddle. It has, indeed, been suggested that more than one of these undiscovered crimes of Bloomsbury, or its vicinity, was the work of the same hand, and on the last-mentioned affair becoming known the question was asked whether the Ripper had anything to do with it. It may have been so, for there is absolutely nothing to show that the East End monster would hesitate to dispose of the hideous evidence of his guilt at spots distant from the

actual scene of his exploits. Before, however, discussing the possibilities of the Whitechapel horrors, we will briefly remark that tragedies, the particulars of which have long ago been pigeon-holed at Scotland Yard, but still linger in the public mind, occurred with more than sufficient frequency to justify a widespread feeling of insecurity before ever the string of East End butcheries fairly scared the citizens of London to such an extent that servant girls were afraid to go on errands after dusk. One of the most audacious of these was the murder of Mrs. Squires and her daughter, in their little shop at Hoxton, during broad daylight. Then at Balham there were two successive inquests as to the death of Mr. Bravo, the second enquiry terminating in a verdict of "wilful murder by poisoning with tartar emetic." This, with the Cannon Street, Stoke Newington, and Ardlamont cases, are the only ones in a long list wherein the victim was not a woman; that is, unless we include the disappearance of the Saint Luke's baker, believed to have been cooked to a handful of ashes in his own oven.

West Ham, Finsbury Park, Richmond, Camden Town, Canonbury and Soho, have had their turns in contributing to the murder chart of Modern Babylon, and still the same outcome of protracted inquiries—no clue to the assassin—a barren result of the law's efforts, repeated with truly damnable iteration.

Strange affairs like that discovery in Harley Street, in the year 1880, might well have tempted a Sherlock Holmes to leave no stone unturned until the dark secret had been explained, and the slayer made to pay the full penalty; but it remains like all the other problems we have mentioned—a sealed one. At this house, in the occupation of a Mr. Henriques, the decomposed body of a woman who had been stabbed to death was found. Those are the plain and terrible facts, and such, with nothing more to add, they remain to-day.

Without attempting to describe, or even enumerate, the series known as the Ripper crimes, we will point out one or two circumstances which have almost escaped notice. The total of these murders is a formidable one. Some of those attributed to the Ripper may not have been the result of his fiendish handiwork, but on the other hand, revolting discoveries in districts remote from Whitechapel, have, perhaps, shown traces of his own peculiar atrocity. We have hinted at this in connection with the finding of

mutilated remains at Burton Crescent, but this was by no means an isolated case. About the same period, parcels containing various portions of a murdered woman were found in the shrubberies of Battersea Park and in some gardens on the opposite side of the river. The victim was identified by her sister, who gave evidence at the inquest. Now, it is a curious fact, which may be nothing more than a coincidence, that it transpired that the murdered woman had lived long in Whitechapel.

Whilst the Ripper continued to stagger London by the audacity of his deeds, committed time after time within his own chosen area, everybody was busy speculating as to what kind of man he was, and whether he would be caught. A grievance he had against the women of a particular class, in a particular locality, seemed the most plausible way to account for the range of his operations being limited to Whitechapel and its immediate vicinity. Some, indeed, thought the Ripper to be a woman, but the majority of folk suspected him to be a ship's fireman, as this would account for the intermittent cessation of the crimes. At last, in a den off Dorset Street, Spitalfields, a murder was committed excelling, if that were possible, all the previous feats of the Ripper in its magnitude of devildom. The most remarkable feature of this act is, that it was the only one of the long category which was carried out indoors. Those who care to explore the scenes of these midnight tragedies, will find that den to-day readily enough, and can examine the death-trap which the Whitechapel fiend once left like a slaughter-house. You go under a narrow archway, and, stopping short of a small and poverty-stricken court which it leads to, tap at a door on the right. On admission, you find yourself in a little room, having but one door, namely, that by which you have entered. There is no other means of exit, save by a window. The close atmosphere of the squalid locality, and its forbidding aspect, will probably suggest not only the advisability of a speedy departure, but also the propriety of keeping the pipe going and the coat buttoned up during your hurried dive into the heart of Ripper-land. Having parted with a sixpence, many of which coins must have found their way here of late years, you emerge into the brighter light and purer air of the broad and more salubrious thoroughfare by Spitalfields church, and, breathing more freely, you begin musing, if your curiosity has not been already amply glutted, as to the identity of the

monster who has created, perhaps, the most horrible criminal mystery of the century.

Many theories have been broached on this head, but of all we have come across, only one appears to have a solid basis, and that is, that Jack the Ripper is, for the time being, locked up in an asylum at prison. In this connection we may mention a curious circumstance which happened between two and three years ago, and which an article published in the pages of *London Society* was almost the first to draw attention to. One prominent evening paper did, indeed, discuss the matter for a day or two, but, for some reason or other, dropped it as quickly as Scotland Yard appears to have done. The facts are thus:

In the small hours of the morning, a ship's fireman, who gave the name of Grant, was caught red-handed just after stabbing a woman in a Spitalfields alley. The victim recovered after three weeks in the London Hospital, and gave evidence in due course at the Central Criminal Court against her assailant. The nature of the offence indicated the possibility of the prisoner being the long sought Ripper. The hour, the place and the woman, were three factors strengthening the supposition that the man in the dock was the miscreant who had so successfully eluded detection for so many butcheries. The fact, moreover, that he was a ship's fireman was startling. Grant was an assumed name—the real one was known to the authorities but never publicly divulged, and it was said that his parents were in a respectable position in the south of Ireland. The Recorder in his summing up, severely blamed the *faulty framing* of the indictment, which prevented him from sentencing the accused to more than ten years penal servitude! Now it would be interesting to know why this ruffian was indicted for "feloniously wounding" instead of attempted murder. Who was responsible for this huge legal blunder, and why was it made? What were the real antecedents of the so-called Grant? Why was the case dropped by those who did comment upon it for a day or two as if it were a red-hot potatoe? These are questions which in the public interest one would like to see answered. It only remains to add that the past year or so has added one of the blackest periods to the annals of unsolved crime, deeds of slaughter at Windsor, Plaistow, Walthamstow, and Bethnal Green rivalling one another in horror, and equally baffling to the Criminal Investigation Department.

Blunders, whether originating at the Treasury or in Scotland Yard, do not contribute to the general security of the public. We have quoted the opinion of one judge on the terrible prevalence of one phase of crime, and it may not be amiss in conclusion, to remark that another judge, the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone not many years ago, declared in open court, that he and everybody present knew full well that there was a power in the land far stronger than the Queen's Law, namely that of the Fetish. Nearer home it would seem that the law is handicapped by another fetish in the shape of red tape. If some member of parliament should call for a return of the number of cases of murder which have happened during the past thirty years, and for which there has been no conviction, we venture to think that even the Home Secretary would be surprised at the black total.

Three Christmas Eves.

By FLORENCE MASTERS.

Author of "BY THE HAND OF NISHMA," etc. etc.

CHAPTER I.

It was Christmas Eve and Anton Heimsweh's thoughts flew, as was natural at such a season, to his happy childhood. Snow was falling intermittently, and Anton hugged his old fiddle-case closer as he faced the north wind. It was just a little past ten o'clock when he left the Operhaus, where he led the second fiddles. He had ample time, he said to himself, to get his supper before setting out for midnight mass, a service he never missed. He was a tall gaunt man, with square shoulders and a face seamed and scarred by small-pox; but his broad forehead, bright grey eyes and kindly expression, for all that it was tinged with melancholy, inspired confidence and betokened that a warm heart beat beneath a somewhat rugged exterior. He was not rich in this world's goods, nor was he very likely to become so, for his artistic instinct tempted him to improvidence, whilst his charitable ones often landed him in diffi-

culties, and beyond his beloved Cremona, on which he could have realized a goodly sum, he owned little that the poorest could have envied him. But then he had no one dependent on him, and was practically alone in the world, and but for the ministrations of Anna, the faithful old servant who had tended him from his babyhood and refused more than one tempting offer of higher wages in rich houses to remain with him, his lot would have been a cheerless one indeed.

Still he was happy in his way, and earned his daily bread in a manner fairly congenial to him, but time was when he had rebelled against his fate, for he had known both sorrow and disappointment. As far back as his memory carried him, he had played the violin, as his father had done before him, and according to the elder Heimsweh's judgment, Anton as a child, was little short of a genius. For a time all went well; the boy being placed under a good master, made rapid progress, and bid fair to realize his father's ambitions for him; then a terrible thing befel them, they were attacked by small-pox, to which hideous disease the elder man succumbed, whilst it left Anton weakly and disfigured for life, dispelling for ever his hopes and ambitions. In the first place he would never be physically strong enough to stand the strain of continuous work necessary to make of him a virtuoso, the doctor said, and moreover he was extremely sensitive about his altered appearance; and having all an artist's instinctive love of the beautiful, and shrinking himself involuntarily from deformity and distortion, he felt that the concert platform was no place for him. The decision was not arrived at without many an inward struggle; but once having made up his mind he never wavered, but took up the position left vacant by his father's death, and in time grew in a measure resigned to circumstances. Occasionally he would indulge in melancholy retrospect, and flying to his fiddle for comfort, would extract the sweetest, saddest music from it; then old Anna would protest, for she read the meaning underlying it all, and with a sigh Anton would put his instrument away and strive to grow cheerful again, so kindly goodnatured was he. So on the night in question, with his heart full of recollections of his childhood and the dead and gone parent (who had been mother and father too, for his mother had died in giving birth to him)—his vanished hopes and ambitions—he yet entered the room with a

smile and word of greeting for Anna, who, with her clean cap and snowy apron, and shrewd keen face, pierced by black eyes that had once been merry, looked comely enough for all her fifty odd years.

"Ah! supper is ready, I see," he said, as having glanced at the table he proceeded to wipe the snowflakes off his fiddle-case, and then sat down to enjoy his meal, whilst Anna waited upon him assiduously, scolding and coaxing him by turns as he ate or refused what she offered him. Then he got into his fur coat again and made his way to the cathedral, where, being naturally devout, he grew soothed and calmed under the influence of prayer and praise, and came away full of thoughts of the Christ-child, giving liberally as they passed the plate which was held "for the little children of the poor."

Outside the snow had ceased; the stars were shining brightly overhead; the traffic had dwindled down to a solitary carriage, when something happened which was destined to alter the even course of Anton's present existence, and bring sunshine into his lonely life.

Suddenly a long wailing cry, followed by sob after sob, broke on the still frosty air, and Anton paused and listened, and determined that it came from close at hand. Peering into the dark recesses of an arched doorway, he descried what looked like a tiny bundle of clothing in the far corner. Uttering some re-assuring words, at which the bundle stirred and quivered, and the sobbing momentarily ceased, he stretched out his long thin fingers and touched the object, and instantly a child's chubby hand clasped his tightly; then having ascertained that the poor little mite was alone, he caught up the light burden and made with all speed for the warmth and shelter of his own rooms.

"Anna! Anna! come see, I have picked up a little waif by the roadside!"

"Gott in Himmel! The man will ruin himself, I know it!" exclaimed the old Frau, whose horror at her master's improvident ways and dread of their consequences were daily and hourly made manifest. "Ah! the pretty little girl!" broke from her in spite of her fears as Anton slowly unrolled the coarse woollen shawl that enveloped his treasure-trove, disclosing the curly golden head and dimpled face of a child who appeared to be some three or four years of age.

Fears fringed the lashes which shaded the deep dark blue eyes, but she smiled as she looked up at Anton, which conquered him once and for all.

"Get her food Anna, quick! something warm and sweet; then perhaps she will tell us who she is."

Accordingly Anna, protesting all the while, quickly stirred some thickened milk, which Anton gravely administered in small spoonfuls, between each of which he plied the little one with gentle questions, but elicited nothing but head shakings by way of reply.

When she had taken it all, she nestled her golden head closer to Anton and commenced to sing a well-known lullaby in a voice singularly sweet and clear; then the eyelids drooped, the rounded limbs relaxed, the little breast heaved softly and regularly; the child was fast asleep.

For some time Anna and Anton sat watching her, awed by the calmness of her innocent repose; then the former took her from her master, saying that until the morning nothing could be done towards establishing her indenture, and that he had better show a little common sense for once and go to bed, with which parting shaft she carried the child triumphantly to her own room.

Anton, as usual, took her blunt remarks in good part, knowing, as he did so well, that her loyalty and devotion to him amply atoned for her shrewishness, but for all that, he failed altogether to act on her suggestions, and sat long into the night, dreaming dreams in which the tiny child he had brought home figured largely. He pictured her as staying with him always, and gradually changing from childhood to girlhood and so on, until at last she stood before him a beautiful woman; then he awoke from his reverie and remembered that doubtless some one was watching and weeping through the weary hours of the night, who would seek and claim their treasure so soon as ever he made known her whereabouts. His life had been so lonely and colourless of late years that it was small wonder that he contemplated the child's remaining with him with joy, and, sighing as he realized the improbability of her doing so, he went to bed a sadder man for his temporary exaltation.

But he need not have done, for the next night, and the next, and many another found the child an inmate of his home. No one ever came to claim her, although Anton left no stone unturned to discover from whence she had come; only on Christmas morning a poor

woman was found frozen to death not very far from the spot where Anton had discovered the child. She had the same coloured hair and eyes as the little one, and Anton fancied he could trace a likeness in the white, emaciated features, but there was nothing about the poor creature to aid identification; the dead lips told no tales, and the secret remained such, and no light was ever thrown on the matter in after years.

To Anna's dismay, Anton bore the expense of giving the unknown decent burial, then set to work to win the affections of the child, about which there was no great difficulty. She was sweet-tempered and sunny, called herself Luise, and trotted about with old Anna, singing gaily like a little bird. Then when Anton came in she would clamber on his knee, pull his long shaggy locks, and tease him till he took out his fiddle, when she would seat herself on the ground in front of him, eagerly drinking in the music and clamouring for more whenever he paused. Anna would come and look at them from time to time, and smile scornfully at what she termed the master's weakness; nevertheless, she blessed the little one for the joy her coming had heralded.

What a change had come over Heimsweh since the child's advent! Day by day, as she ingratiated herself more and more, he grew perceptibly happier, the looks of sadness vanished from his face, or was only seen at rare intervals, and then Luise could invariably charm it away; his step grew lighter and he seemed suddenly to shake off ten years of his life. Not that he was not still a young man, but sorrow and lack of hope had aged him, and he told himself that he had buried the latter with his ambitions. Women he carefully avoided, dreading that in seeking for love he should only find pity in their eyes as they rested on his poor disfigured features.

With the child—the little one who had nestled so lovingly against him the very first night of their acquaintance—all this was forgotten, and Anton fearlessly poured out on her the wealth of affection that had so long lacked an object.

One tangible proof he gave of this, when Luise had only been with them a very short time. He, who was usually one of the most unassuming of men, sought out the music director, and demanded promotion, threatening to seek another post if his wishes were not complied with; but they were; he understood his work too well to be lightly dispensed with, and henceforth he sat at the leader's desk, and got more liberal remuneration for his services.

"The child will have to be educated and clothed," he remarked to Anna; and educated and clothed she was, in accordance with his usual generous ideas where other people were concerned. For himself he went shabbier and lived more frugally as the years flew by, but each one found him happier than the last, as he watched the growth and development of the tender flower he had transplanted from the wilderness of the world into the garden of his own home.

At sixteen—or what they guessed to be that age—Luise showed promise of great beauty; her features were delicately curved and outlined, her skin was whiter than the lily, her eyes had deepened in colour, and were grave and earnest, whilst her hair, of rare pale gold, fell in two thick plaits almost to her knees. Moreover, she was an accomplished musician; she could play the piano well, studied harmony and counterpoint with a zest that often astonished Anton, and warbled like a bird, with a full rich voice that gave warm promise of better things to come. Anton sometimes wondered how these two great gifts of beauty and song would affect her future, but for the most part he was content to live in the present, only he carefully put by every piece of money he could possibly spare for her until, Anna, who had been wont to blame him for his improvident ways, was now sometimes tempted to twit him with meanness—especially concerning his personal expenditure. It was true he was much better off than in the old days, but his health was very indifferent, and often enforced idleness on him when he most desired activity. Anna scolded as of old when he fretted and fumed, but inwardly it grieved her to see how quickly he grew weak and ill.

He still retained his post at the Opera House, and got other engagements, but he was often unable to fulfill them. However, they now rented a pleasant suite of rooms in one of the principal thoroughfares; Anna kept them spotlessly clean, whilst Luise made them home-like with deft touches from her clever fingers, and Anton declared that he would not have exchanged them for a palace.

For a while all went well, but Luise's fate was destined to be decided by the advent of a stranger amongst them, a wily Italian, one Count Rivioli, who had taken the rooms beneath theirs, and from the first had made distinctly friendly overtures. Anton did not like

the man, in spite of his gifts and efforts to ingratiate himself, for he could sing really well and play an accompaniment divinely, and they often made music together, but for some reason unknown to himself, Anton would never allow Luise to sing before him.

But Rivioli was perfectly well aware of her great gift, and often, and often, would he stand outside their door, patiently waiting for the moment when Anton should lay aside his violin and say, "Sing, little girl!"

"Diavolo! what a voice!" exclaimed Rivioli one night, as, after freezing for nearly an hour on the landing, he had been rewarded by one of Luise's most brilliant efforts. "It must not—it shall not be wasted, thrown away on this stupid German fiddler, who, doubtless, is in love with his pretty singing-bird, and would keep her close-caged all her life long. But the idea is preposterous; such a voice is for the people—theirs by right. The world would fling itself at her feet, for she possesses the magic of song. Ceconi must hear her, if he has to come all the way from Milan to do so! How I shall enjoy watching his face as he listens. Bah! I will write to-night, there is no time to be lost—such a treasure must not slip through our fingers."

Luise was now nearing her seventeenth birthday, reckoning as they always did that Christmas eve was such, and Anton, as he watched her daily grow more beautiful, grew troubled at the thought that sooner or later someone would surely try to rob him of his treasure! And had he any right to wish to keep her always by his side? In spite of all his efforts, the sum he had managed to put by for her was miserably small, and his failing health warned him that he himself might not be here long to fight her battles for her. And then her voice! Ought he to prevent her reaping the full benefit of it? It would bring her fame, adulation, riches—he knew it, none better—if she had the chance. These questions he evaded repeatedly, but he realized that sooner or later they would have to be answered. And so, even whilst Rivioli was penning his letter to the great impressario, Anton was haunted by a dread of some impending evil—a feeling which Luise's singing even could not charm—indeed, it rather increased it.

"Come, little girl, and sit beside me. I have something to say to you!"

Luise drew up a low stool, and, seating herself, threw one arm caressingly across the master's knee.

"Are you in pain?" she queried. "You are; you look white," she added, gazing anxiously at Anton's seamed and scarred features.

"Not the old pain, little girl; something else is troubling me. I have been thinking about you, Luise, and that we may have to part for a while." And his voice grew husky as he uttered the dread word.

"To part? Have I done anything to make you angry with me, dear master?"

"No, no, child! not that, not that!" And he softly caressed the white hand held out to him.

"Then why talk about it and make me feel so sad; unless you grow tired of me, no one shall ever separate me from you," said Luise, with all the impetuosity of youth; but Anton shook his head by way of reply, and they both sat silent for awhile.

"Luise, have you ever thought about your voice? Do you know it is going to be something quite out of the common—the kind of voice that, if properly trained, would bring all the world to your feet?" Rivioli's own words, uttered but half-an-hour ago. Had Anton known this, he would have shuddered.

"Yes," continued the latter, "you would probably come out in grand opera, where your beauty—for you are beautiful, Luise—would stand you in good stead. You would gain fame and grow rich, and probably, also, you would forget your old master."

Luise's eyes opened wide and grew bright as Anton proceeded; the prospect dazzled her as it would have done any girl of her age, but at his concluding words her face clouded.

"No, no! rather than that I would stay here all my life long. Besides, my training would cost a great deal of money——"

"You would quickly repay any one who spent it on you," put in Anton; "I have a little—a very little—put by for you, Luise. True, I looked upon it as your marriage portion, but it might be better employed——"

"Oh! you are altogether too good to me, dear master. Surely, I ought never to leave you," exclaimed the girl.

"Supposing——" began Anton, but his supposition was interrupted by the entrance of Anna with the supper, during which meal Luise talked incessantly, striving to charm away the gloom which had settled on Anton; but at times her hands trembled and

her eyes grew misty, and that night tears bedewed her pillow, for the master had revealed much to her, and, with a woman, knowledge but too often brings pain.

For the next few days no reference was made to this conversation, though each knew that the other had not forgotten; and, contrary to all customs, Luise never once opened her lips to sing. One day Rivioli called and begged for music, but Anton excused himself, saying he was not feeling well.

"And the young lady; will she not favour me? I should be charmed to play for her," said the Italian, eagerly glancing from one to the other.

Luise coloured crimson, then shook her head, whilst Anton replied that she had not been practising lately.

Rivioli's long, narrow eyes gleamed redly for a moment, but he controlled himself, and shortly after took his leave. "Wait till Cecconi comes," he hissed through his closed teeth, as he shut the door behind him, "he will carry her off, I know it!"

On Christmas eve, Luise was duly fêted; Anna prepared a tempting supper, and the trio made merry over it. Afterwards came music, and Luise's clear soprano, mingled with the full deep notes of Anton's Cremona, were heard for the first time since their memorable conversation, the subject of which had ever since been tacitly ignored by them both.

Luise sang gloriously, and Anton was just saying as much when the door was flung open, and a stranger, a large, loose-limbed man, with flat head and sparkling black eyes, made straight for Luise, seizing both her hands.

"Ah! I ask your pardon, signora, but you sung like an angel, and it is I, Cecconi, who says so; and do I not know? You need but teaching, and in time you will become one of the greatest stars of the Lyric stage! Ah! I cannot help it if you frown, or this good gentleman, your guardian, either; your singing possesses me—fires me. I would have the training of your glorious voice myself."

During this speech, which left the stranger breathless, Luise's colour came and went, whilst a look, half pride, half fear, hovered on her beautiful face; then, as he ceased, she hastily withdrew her hands and took refuge by Anton, who had risen and put down his fiddle at the man's entrance, and was glaring at him fiercely, conscious of the fact that Rivioli was behind him.

"Pardon my friend's intrusion, Herr Heimsweh. I could not hold him back. He is a veritable child of the South, and knows not how to control himself. But really the fraulein herself is to blame, she should not sing so divinely," put in the Count, in his smooth, oily tones.

Anton's face grew distinctly dangerous, and he bowed coldly to Rivioli.

"Ah, no! the young lady is not to blame; she has already done much good work, is it not so, Rivioli?" questioned Cecconi.

"Enough of compliments, gentlemen! My little girl is not used to them, but she is, doubtless, pleased you think well of her voice. Be seated, pray, and we will drink her health since it is her birthday. Bid Anna bring some wine, Luise." Anton spoke in a hard, set voice new to him, which Rivioli was quick to note; and conversation lagged till Anna's entrance created a diversion. Then, when Luise had been duly toasted and had shyly clinked glasses with them, the visitors craved another song, and at a signal from Heimsweh, she rose to comply with their request. She sang from various operas (Verdi, Bellini, Gounod, she was all more or less familiar with), and finishing with a really beautiful rendering of "Elsa's Dream," from Lohengrin, in which she was naturally more at home than in the Italian or French school, once more moved the impressario to enthusiasm, who loaded her with thanks.

"Ah! surely, Herr Heimsweh, you will not dream of keeping so gifted a creature from her proper sphere. If she will only work, I can guarantee that she shall make her first appearance at La Scala, and that she shall be a glorious success."

"But supposing that at present I have not the money——"

"Bah! Rivioli—nay, I myself, will be responsible for that."

The cloud on Anton's face deepened; Rivioli noticed it, and moved quietly to the master's side.

"Remember, you are not strong! You may not be always here to protect and provide for the Fraulein! Think of what might happen to her if she were left penniless and friendless in the world. Is your love for her so selfish——"

"Stop, if you please; our acquaintance is of such recent date that you can hardly have gauged the depths of my feelings towards Luise. Signor Cecconi's offer is worthy of great consideration, and I thank him for it, but the acceptance of it does not lie with me.

Luiſe, dear child, you have heard all that has paſſed between us, you are no longer a child, you muſt decide this matter. Will you go?"

A dead ſilence fell on the little party, whiſt all eyes were fixed on the ſlim, girliſh figure a little apart from Heimsweh, who, with folded arms, and eyes gazing ſtraight before him, ſtood as rigid as a ſtatue. Luiſe glanced appealingly at him once or twice, but he never ſtirred. The moments flew by; conflicting emotions ran hot in her brain and were plainly depicted on her mobile features. She wondered once which made the moſt noiſe, the ticking of the clock or the beating of her own heart. Suddenly her agitation ceaſed, a beautiful ſmile illumined her face.

"Thank you, gentlemen, for your offer. I ſhould like to accept it if the maſter is willing," ſhe ſaid quite ſimply.

"Then it is ſettled," remarked Anton, waving off the impetuous foreigners, and turning away from Luiſe herſelf.

"Are you angry?" ſhe queſtioned later, when they were once more alone.

"No, little girl! you could not make me angry. I only pray God to guide your footsteps when you go out into the great world."

Matters did not take long to arrange. Anton was to pay for board and lodging, whiſt Cecconi undertook the reſt, with the underſtanding and belief that ſooner or later Luiſe would repay him. Rivoli declared that he was quite ſatisfied with taking to himſelf the credit of having diſcovered the ſtar. Anna was to go with Luiſe, and as the time for parting drew near, the faithful ſervant found herſelf drawn two ways, but ſhe never dreamed of queſtioning the maſter's decision, only ſhe grieved to find that the old ſadneſs was faſt ſettling down on Anton, although he ſtrove hard to hide it.

At the laſt moment Luiſe's courage gave way, and ſhe clung tearfully to her benefactor.

"Hush, child! do not cry. Doubtless all is for the beſt. You muſt write very often, Luiſe; if you ceaſe to write, I ſhall take it that you have forgotten me."

"Oh! I could never do that, never!"

"And you will come back to me—promise, child, and you will keep your word."

"I promise, dear maſter."

And Anton was satisfied, and kissed her solemnly on the forehead, then, holding her at arm's length, he drank in eagerly every outline and detail of her girlish loveliness. "Good-bye, dear child. Say your prayers, trust in God, and always speak the truth."

She answered him with a sob, as he put her into the carriage, where Anna was already seated. Then the driver cracked his whip, the horse started at a brisk pace, and in a few moments the vehicle was out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

FOUR years went by—years of pain and sorrow and disappointment—which left their mark on Anton Heimsweh and wrought many changes in his life.

Christmas Eve had again come round, and as he sat in the cheerless room which now served him for a home, and the sound of the bells was borne in through the ill-fitting casement, a great wave of memory swept over him, carrying him away from the little southern town, his temporary dwelling-place, to the great city where he had been born and reared, and spent his happiest days. Every event of his life slowly passed before him—the death of his father, and the blighting of his early ambitions; the finding of Luise, and the happiness she brought; the parting and what came of it. Yes! that was the saddest, bitterest experience of all! Luise had gone out into the wide world never to return, and now if she did, would she recognize her master in this white-haired emaciated prematurely-old man? Hardly; illness and heartache had played strange havoc with him! Only the patient mouth had gathered no bitterness, and the grey eyes gleamed and grew soft as he thought of the little golden-headed girl who had nestled in his arms on that Christmas Eve just seventeen years ago.

"If I might only know that all was well with her I would die content," he murmured. Yes! in spite of all he had suffered, and because of it, his love for her was so strong and pure that he could say that from his very soul.

But her fate was shrouded in mystery, and Anton did not even know for certain that she was alive. At first all had gone well; letters came pretty regularly both from Anna and Luise, and later a

long one from Cecconi saying that his pupil would surpass his wildest hopes, for her voice was of the purest quality, and she had worked so well that she would be able shortly to make her *début*. Then suddenly all communication ceased, and Heimsweh, feeling that he could not bear the suspense, threw up his appointment and started for Italy. Here bad news awaited him ; old Anna had been stricken with fever, which eventually carried her off and soon after her death, much to Cecconi's chagrin, Luise suddenly disappeared.

"Then she did not return to you, my friend? No, I see it, you would speak the truth," remarked the impresario with both sympathy and respect.

Heimsweh shook his head. "Where is Rivioli?" he questioned.

"I do not know! He has left Milan!"

"When? The same day as she did?" Anton's voice was hoarse with fear.

Cecconi nodded gloomily; he could not bear to see this good man's pain. "But why did she not write and tell me of Anna's illness?"

"It was like this, I think. During all the time that the faithful old soul lay ill, Rivioli was very assiduous in his attentions, which, however, I am sure Miss Luise never encouraged. But she was much occupied in the sick room; it is probable she entrusted him with letters, and it is very easy to *forget to post a letter*."

Anton groaned aloud, then thanking Cecconi for his information, he left him a broken-hearted man. But he would find Luise sooner or later, and he would punish that scoundrel, but he must wait, perhaps for years before he came across him!

And so it came to pass that he wandered half over Europe, from one town to another, earning a little money and then moving on again, but for long he heard nothing of either Luise or his arch-enemy. Then by strange chance he ran against the latter in the street of a little town in Austria. At first Rivioli would have avoided him, hurrying on his way, but suddenly his purpose changed, and turning on his heel the two men stood face to face. Anton was speechless, but Rivioli was quite at his ease.

"I am glad we have met, Herr Heimsweh! I want a word with you, but this is rather a public place—shall we adjourn to a *café*?"

Anton nodded and followed the man as one in a dream. His audacity had astounded him.

"You will drink? No? Then to business; I have a little account which I hope you will settle. Now I know perfectly well that you think that I am the man who spirited away your pretty little love-bird; I saw it in your face the moment that we met; but I have ample proof that whatever might have been my inclination in the matter, I had nothing to do with her disappearance. Your ward was about to come out in Milan, when her faithful duenna was taken ill; she had been pleased to appoint me her agent; there are certain little payments I had to make in consequence of her not fulfilling the engagements I had booked for her! Now, I do not intend to rest till I have found her and received my money or its equivalent!" and saying which Rivioli handed Heimsweh a roll of papers which, on examination, proved to be receipts for sums of money from certain well-known managers.

"Ah! so you have shown yourself in your true colours at last!" said Anton, eyeing the man scornfully.

Rivioli merely shrugged his shoulders, and the German sat lost in thought.

"What would induce you to give up your pursuit of the lady," he said at length.

Rivioli eyed him craftily for a few moments, then a greedy light gleamed in his eyes. "The money, paid down with interest, within a week."

"And you will sign a written agreement not to molest her again?"

The Italian nodded and smiled, a cruel mocking smile.

"Very well! I shall I think need but three days, then the money shall be paid here before witnesses." And it was!—but Anton's beloved Cremona was lost to him for ever!

However, that he would have counted a small sacrifice, could he have found his little girl, but the days and months flew by, and he could gain no tidings of her. Then he fell ill amongst strangers, and was put to sore straits, but kind hearts had discovered him, and he hoped he had tided over the worst. But a few nights back the old weakness had seized him, he had been taken ill whilst playing, had been carried home half insensible, and ever since had been unable to leave his room. The strange part of it was, he had had a vision—he had seen Luise, and heard her sing once more. She had grown more beautiful, he thought, and her figure had developed and rounded, but the old child-like look of innocence still lingered in her

large blue eyes, as though the world had left her unspotted. She was clad in a loose-flowing white robe, and her beautiful hair hung down far below her knees, and the notes that fell from her lips were the last he had heard her sing—the closing bars of “Elsa’s Dream.” He could in no way account for the delusion, but somehow it brought him great comfort, and turning from the sad pictures of the past, he went over it again as he had done a dozen times since his seizure.

Suddenly he shivered, for a cold blast of air swept across the room, and he drew his shabby dressing gown tighter round him. Then a little rustling sound caused him to look round, and there once more he saw his little girl, and instinctively stretched out his arms to her, thinking all the time that she would vanish from his sight as she had done before. But instead, she came swiftly forward, and knelt by his side, and in a moment his arms encircled her, and her pretty golden head nestled against him as it had done in the days long gone by. For some moments they remained thus, then Anton, gently disengaging himself, held his treasure a little away from him and looked long and searchingly into the beautiful eyes as though he would read her innermost thoughts.

Luise bore the scrutiny well, her sweet face grave, as became the occasion, but with no trace of fear upon it.

“My little girl still! The world has not harmed you,” said Anton with a sigh of relief. “Ah! but I have suffered much, Luise! Why did you not either come to me or write? But you shall tell me your story in your own way.”

“What, to-night, dear master? It grows late, and you are looking so tired.”

“We were never wont to go to bed early on Christmas eve, child, in the old days.”

“Ah, those happy days! If only they could come back again! But they never can—never will!”

“How did you find me out, little girl?”

“I heard your name mentioned by the music director at the theatre. I could hardly believe my ears for *he* had told me you were dead!”

“Who? Rivioli?”

“Yes, dear!”

“Luise——”

“I had a business communication from him some time ago, and he mentioned it in his letter. But I had better go right back to the

beginning, then you will understand it. Ah! you may well frown at his name, dear master; he is a bad man, and has caused us both much misery. He drove me from Milan with his persistent persecutions; I flew to the old home to find it empty, and as I turned away in utter despair, I caught sight of his hated figure in the distance, and I knew he had followed me. By this time I was almost penniless, but fear lent me wings, and I walked and ran many miles till late in the evening I came to a large town, where I sang in the streets in order to earn money enough to pay for a night's lodging. An eccentric English lady, staying at an hotel there, happened to hear me, and sent her maid to fetch me in, soon drawing from me my story. She gave me shelter and food, and treated me with great kindness; but I proved a sad burden to her, for the next day I fell with the fever, and for six weeks I knew nothing. When I recovered my reason, she offered me a permanent home with her, on condition that I renounced all ideas of going on the stage, and promised not to communicate with anyone I had known during my stay at Milan. I accepted the proposition gratefully, and as soon as I was strong enough, we started for England—not before she had tried many means and ways to get news of you. Then, about a year ago she died, leaving me a small legacy, whilst the bulk of her money (she was very rich) went to different charities. Then, being free to please myself, I sought for an engagement in England, and easily obtained it, and already I have made a great deal of money, and I think you will be proud of your little girl when you hear her sing."

"Ah! then it was you playing the part of Elsa the other night, and I thought it but imagination on my part," said Anton, touching her again as if to assure himself once more that she was flesh and blood. "But you have not told me why you wrote to that scoundrel Rivioli," he reminded her.

"Oh! he heard of my prosperity and he wrote demanding money."

"He did, Luise? Why I paid up every penny he demanded. Ah! he will come to a bad end! He has not renewed his overtures?"

"No, he dare not, I have a friend who has taken matters in his own hands, and I am no longer afraid of Rivioli's persecutions."

"A friend, Luise? Is he nothing more?"

The girl blushed and then hid her face.

"Then I have found you only to lose you again, little girl?"

"No, not so! We shall never be parted again. I am rich, and you will come and share our home, and do no more work, dear master, only play to me and teach me as in the days of old." As Luise spoke her eyes grew misty with tears. She was thinking of the great change that had come over Anton since last they parted.

"And the friend, when shall I see him?"

"To-morrow, dear master, you shall give us your blessing."

"To-morrow," murmured Anton dreamily, "who can tell what to-morrow may bring?"

An ill-defined fear shot through Luise as he uttered the words, and, to charm it off, she rose and, in the old way, began to make the room more comfortable, whilst all the time Anton watched her every movement with a happy smile on his pallid face. Then she warmed some soup and insisted on the master drinking it, after which she said she must go, her maid was waiting below and it grew late. Anton enquired where she was staying, and she named the largest hotel in the place.

"Good-night, little girl. God bless you and keep you!" said Anton, putting his hand on the bowed head before him.

"Good-night, dear master; sleep well, and to-morrow we shall come for you;" saying which, she was gone.

Anton sat for a while, his hands peacefully folded, his eyes full of a happy light, his lips moving occasionally in words of thanksgiving; then he lay down to rest, and dreams for a long while haunted his slumbers—dreams all about the old days, when first his little girl had come to him and old Anna had tended her. "See how close she nestles to me, Anna," he was saying; and Anna had replied that she would not always stay there, and a sharp pang shot through his heart and woke him. After that he grew restless and talked much in his sleep; then suddenly he called aloud, "Coming, Anna, coming!" sank back on his pillow and all was still.

Bye and bye the moonbeams stole in at the window and lighted on the rugged features, giving them a strange new beauty of their own. The seams and scars had almost disappeared; the lines of pain about the mouth, as well as the deep indentation of the forehead, were scarcely visible, and something of his boyhood's look had stolen into the face on which rested a calm, happy smile.

Death had laid its hand gently on Anton Heimsweh, and the loving, suffering heart of the man was for ever at rest.

A Mysterious Manuscript.

By KATE LEE.

"It's a splendid plot!" said Beatrice O'Brien.

Her voice was rich and soft. In her pretty dark face, a physiognomist would have read keen intuitiveness, receptiveness, and great impressionability. Her brown eyes were both bright and dreamy; the lips, the most perfect feature in the face, had subtly sweet and sensitive curves; the forehead, broad and arched, showed considerable intellectual and imaginative capacity. It was easy to perceive that rare, perhaps dangerous, possibilities lurked in the girl's nature.

"Yes," said Louis Weyman, "the plot is all right. But there it remains,—a plot, and nothing but a plot. I can't work it up into anything. All my ideas for it are chaotic, vague, crude; I can't get them into shape. There's no life in the thing. And there's no art in the rubbish I've been turning out lately,—not a shadow of it. My mind won't fasten on to anything, and when I try to force it the pain in my head maddens me."

Louis threw out his sentences with vicious, impatient energy, and then lay back in his chair with a sudden collapse into listlessness. He was a young man, scarcely thirty, but a long spell of trouble and ill-health had made him look older. His clever resolute face was pale and tired looking, and the restless brilliance of his steel-grey eyes told its own tale of nervous strain. He and Beatrice were in the little box of a room he called his writing den. It was at the back of the house, on the first floor, and looked out upon a small garden, where there flourished, in addition to an untended tangle of flowers and shrubs, an ancient apple-tree and a fine laburnum. The scanty apple-blossom had lately fallen, but the laburnum was in full yellow-golden glory. The trees were so close to Louis's window that the little room appeared to be perched nestlike amidst them; the upper branches of the apple-tree tapped at the window panes, and some of the laburnum tassels were within reach of an outstretched hand. Beyond the brick wall at the end of the garden, and bounded by walls of other gardens, lay a long plot of waste ground, from one side of which there towered up a solitary elm

tree, freshly green of foliage, and majestic in height and form. The May evening sky was softly blue. Westward there burned a golden flame of sunset. It was altogether a pleasanter outlook than might have been expected from the back window of a small house in a narrow suburban street. Within, the little room was bare and unadorned. The floor was uncarpeted, the walls devoid of pictures; a handsome rosewood davenport, with a plain wooden chair in front of it, and the shabby lounging chair Louis was occupying, constituted the whole of its furniture. The incongruous davenport looked, as in fact it was, a relic of better days. Louis was wont to declare that in a scantily furnished room he could write at his best, but necessity, not idiosyncrasy, had dictated the asceticism of his present surroundings.

Beatrice, sitting on the chair beside the davenport, and leaning her arms across the back of it, was looking towards her cousin with a sympathetically sad and clouded face. She was acquainted with all the sources of his distress, and could plumb the depths of his present trouble, for she too was a writer, and artist enough to comprehend an artist's discontent with defective work. Her talent, it is true, was of a far lower order than his; she had nothing of his power, his *virility*, his perfection of workmanship, but she wrote charming little stories, touched with delightful humour, and with notes of deep pathos sounding through them. The story she and Louis were discussing was one Louis had been asked to write for the opening number of a new magazine. The request had been a flattering one to him, for the projected *English Magazine of Fiction* was to have for its chief contributors some of the best writers of the day. For months past the nervous breakdown from which he had been suffering, with acute head pain as its worst symptom, had almost paralysed his powers of work. But for his pocket's sake he could not afford to set aside the request, so, promising the contribution, he had to set to work a few days ago to try and force his fagged brain into activity. The meagre and unsatisfactory results of his efforts had reduced him to despair.

"I wish I could help you!" said Beatrice, wistfully. In her lustrous eyes there was an intense depth of pity, and a passionate longing to be of service. "Tell me more about it, Louis," she went on, "Do you remember, when we were children, how you used to talk over your stories to me, and how it used to help you?"

A bright smile of mutual reminiscence flashed between them.

"Yes," said Louis, "and you always used to look as if you were fascinated,—half mesmerised!" Then pulling himself together, and already cheered by her sympathy, he began to elaborate in speech the conception he had in his mind. As he talked his face lit up with hope and animation, and Beatrice's quickly showed an answering glow. The chaos of ideas struggling in his brain became reduced to something like order, and details assumed their right proportions. He had dramatic faculty, and a gift of graphic speech, so that he was able to make the story live before his hearer. Beatrice hung upon every word and gesture with absorbed attention. Her quick perception, her enthusiastic appreciation, all vividly expressed in her mobile face, helped him on. A mood of inspiration came upon him. He grew more and more forceful and dramatic in his presentment of the story, and Beatrice's shining brown eyes gazed with fascination into the steel-grey brilliance of his. Her whole face was rapt. She was caught utterly out of and beyond herself. If Louis himself had not been so absorbed he must have seen that there was something abnormal in her look. Presently he sprang to his feet. "I believe I can do it now," he cried, exultantly. "It's all as clear as daylight. Beatrice, you have helped me wonderfully!"

Beatrice rose too. But she said nothing. She looked as if she were seeing something within. For a moment the strangeness of the look penetrated to Louis's consciousness, but he was too lost in his own excitement to reflect on it. He saw it, without, at the time, thinking about it. The look was one of a nature not altogether unfamiliar on Beatrice's face; but the intensity of it was unusual. As she silently moved away from the desk Louis took his place at it, and began immediately to send a rapid pen flying over a sheet of paper. In a dreamy manner Beatrice went softly from the room.

The cousinship between Beatrice O'Brien and Louis Weyman was a remote one, but in friendship and comradeship they had been closely united since early childhood. During long years of happy, careless prosperity the homes of the O'Briens and the Weymans had been near together, and the O'Brien boys and girls had been as brothers and sisters to Louis Weyman, who had none of his own. Between Louis and the eldest girl, Beatrice, community of tastes and of talent had from the beginning created a special bond. A few years ago the death of Mr. O'Brien had plunged his

wife and family into poverty. Quite recently, after the death of both parents, Louis Weyman had most unexpectedly experienced the same reverse of fortune. He had had reason to look forward to a future free from pecuniary cares and anxieties, and devoted, as the past had been, to the leisurely cultivation of his literary gift. Instead of that he now found himself forced to turn his talent to account for the earning of his daily bread. That talent was of no mean order, and he had already, before the shock of misfortune came upon him, gained some little reputation for himself. The short stories which had appeared under his name for years past in the best periodicals had been recognised as the productions of a true artist, and he had published one novel, a work full of promise. If health permitted there was no doubt but that Louis Weyman could make his way as a writer of fiction and a journalist. But there was the rub. Health, so far, was not permitting. He was living with his cousins, the O'Briens. When his old home was broken up, that had seemed the most natural arrangement possible. It meant a little over-crowding, for there had been scarcely a sufficiency of room before for the large family in the little house, but it also meant mutual advantage from a pecuniary point of view, as well as mutual pleasure in the companionship secured, and, his den allotted to him in peace and privacy for the purposes of his work, Louis was glad and content, for the rest, to share the straitened, but happy, family life.

On the morning after his talk with Beatrice, Louis, immediately after breakfast, sought as usual his writing den. His step was lagging, his demeanour depressed. The story had not been written after all last night. The attempt had ended in another dispiriting failure. After the excitement a re-action had set in, and the glow of inspiration had died quickly away, leaving him mentally exhausted and physically racked with pain. As he sat down to the davenport this morning an expression of astonishment and bewilderment leaped suddenly into his face. He had left nothing on the desk last night but a few torn sheets of paper, representing the futile, painful efforts he had been making; beside the scattered fragments there now lay a neat manuscript in his own clear close handwriting. He hurriedly read the title-line. It was the title of his story!

"How on earth—!" he ejaculated, and stopped short midway in his sentence, too puzzled to finish it. "How on earth—!" He

caught up the manuscript in his hand, wonderingly turned the pages over and over, and then settled down to read them.

It was certainly his own story. There was the plot just as he had conceived it, there were the incidents he had intended to introduce, the scenes he had wished to depict. The style of writing was his—vivid, suggestive, concentrated. The workmanship fell a little short of his usual standard; it was somewhat unequal. Here and there were weaknesses and crudities of which, in his better days, he could never have been guilty, but, with a few alterations and finishing touches, it would pass muster, and do neither himself nor the magazine discredit. The story was not, however, quite completed. It broke off abruptly just as the climax was reached.

He put the mysterious manuscript down on the desk again, and stared at it hard, as if in that way to wrest from it its secret.

"How on earth did it get itself written?" he cried, finishing his ejaculatory sentence this time. "When, and how on earth did I do it?" And the only probable, or possible explanation, as it seemed to him, suddenly flashed across him. "By jove, I must have done it in my sleep!" he said. "What a marvellous thing!"

With redoubled curiosity and interest he looked again at the manuscript. "It's uncanny," he thought to himself. "I'll go straight to Frank, and ask him what he thinks about it."

Frank was his friend, and a doctor.

He rolled up the manuscript, sped downstairs with it, and snatching his hat from the hall-stand, left the house. At the corner of the street, where it emerged upon a tree-bordered main road, was his cousin Beatrice. She was waiting for a tram to take her to her daily work of school-teaching. She had a fatigued appearance; the usually rich colour of her cheeks was much subdued, and her eyes had a strained look. As Louis reached her side she gave a quick glance at the roll of manuscript in his hand.

"Ah!" he said, following her glance, "thereby hangs a tale!" And he rapidly related to her what had occurred. "Somnambulism really is the only possible explanation, isn't it?" he said, as he concluded.

At that moment a tram drew near, and turning away from him, Beatrice hailed it.

"You look so pale and tired to-day, Beatrice," Louis said, anxiously, as he handed her on to the tram. "What is the matter?"

There was a note of tenderness in his voice, and, detecting it, Beatrice won back for a moment some of her colour.

"Oh, it's nothing," she said, brightly. "I did not sleep much last night."

When she had taken her seat, she looked out at him, with a light that looked half mischievous glowing in her dark eyes. Louis, looking back at her, strove to banish a certain tell-tale light from his own eyes. The nature of his feelings towards Beatrice had lately been undergoing a great, and somewhat disturbing, transformation. The tram bore her away, and he walked thoughtfully on to Dr. Frank Morrison's.

The doctor, a young man of his own age, with psychological leanings, was in his consulting-room. He listened with keen interest—both friendly and professional—to Louis's tale, and agreed that somnambulism alone could be the solution of the mystery. With his overwrought nerves, and with the writing of the story so much on his mind, Louis, he said, was just in the condition in which the brain is apt to play strange tricks with itself. It was a wonderful, but by no means an unprecedented, occurrence. Aiding one another's memories, the friends raked up between them all the instances they could recall of similar occurrences—of problems having been worked out in sleep by mathematicians, of verses having been composed by poets—Coleridge and his *Kubla Khan*, of course, not being forgotten. They reminded one another, moreover, that feats more extraordinary than these were upon record, for people had been known not only to carry on their usual intellectual occupations during sleep, but to greatly exceed, while in that condition, their normal powers, and even sometimes to develop talents which had before lain within them unknown. The same kind of phenomena, Dr. Morrison remarked in passing, took place in the case of people subjected to hypnotic influence.

"Well, it's a very good turn I've done myself in my sleep," said Louis, gaily, as he rose to go. He tossed the manuscript in the air, and caught it as it descended. "I can get this finished off now in an hour or so, I feel sure," he said, in a sanguine voice.

Like most artists, he lived in constant alternations of hope and despair concerning his work.

One evening, a few days later, Louis left the house at dusk, and dropped a thin roll of manuscript into the pillar-box at the corner of

the street. It was not his story for the *English Magazine of Fiction*; that was not even yet finished. The manuscript he was posting was nothing but one of a series of letters he was contributing to a local newspaper. The effort he had made to finish his story after getting it begun in so miraculous a manner, had had no satisfactory result, and each subsequent effort had been quite abortive. Either inspiration flagged, or the agonising pain in his head forbade all exertion. The end of the story, upon which its success depended, remained unwritten. It was the part which demanded the greatest concentration of his powers; any feebleness in it, any want of grasp or finish, would spoil the whole. And it was just this concentration his mental and physical condition made so impossible. The somnambulist phenomenon had not been repeated, as he had found himself hoping it would be. Every evening, half amused at himself for so doing, he had placed his paper on his desk ready for use in the night; every morning, to his chagrin, he had found it blank as he had left it.

As he turned away from the pillar-box, Beatrice came towards it. Her errand was the same as his own, the posting of a manuscript. It was one of the short magazine stories she occasionally wrote when her work of teaching left her energy enough. Louis took it from her hand, and put it in the box for her.

"Shall we just walk across the common and back?" he said.

Beatrice assenting, they turned into the main road, crossed it, and passed on to an enclosed common. It was a beautiful evening. The whole western sky was heaped up with grand masses of purple cloud, broken through at points by fiery shafts of crimson splendour. Overhead, the pale blue of evening was deepening into the dusky blue of night. A faintly-golden full moon had appeared. With the twilight falling every moment in soft greyness around them, Louis and Beatrice paced slowly side by side along the winding path across the grass. A desperate longing was upon Louis to speak out to Beatrice what was in his heart towards her, but for the present he felt in honour bound to maintain silence. He would have given much to know if, on Beatrice's side, there had been a change of feeling corresponding to his own. Of late he had fancied that she did not now meet his eyes with all her former frank affection; but however that might be, or whatever it might mean, he had a pleasant conviction that if her love were not already his, the winning

of it would not be a difficult task. When, however, would the hour arrive at which he could honourably set himself to the task? Gloomy forebodings assailed him that health and power of work had gone from him for ever. Thinking these thoughts, he grew very silent, until Beatrice, perceiving his depression, and partly divining its cause, began to speak of the uncompleted story.

"It is a splendid plot," she said. "Tell me about the end again, Louis."

With a difference of surroundings, the history of a few evenings ago was repeated. Under the stimulus of Beatrice's appreciation and sympathy, Louis plucked up heart and hope again, talked himself into excitement, and dramatised, as it were, before her, the climax of the story. She was his only audience, for at that hour the common was almost deserted. She listened with the same rapt attention as before. Louis's eyes flashed their forceful fire of inspiration into hers, and held her fascinated. Soon the story's end stood out before them both, clearly defined, full of power, convincing, perfect.

When they had returned, and were re-entering the house, Louis, holding back the door for Beatrice to pass in, noticed for a moment a curious dreaminess and exaltation in the expression of her face. As on the former occasion, lost in his own mental excitement, he observed, without reflecting on, the look. She passed him silently, and went upstairs. Louis followed, and turned into his den. Sentences carved out like gems, and as brilliant as gems, were unfortunately thronging his brain. He lighted his lamp, and sat down to the davenport. A few minutes' eager work sufficed to bring on his torturing head-pain. For awhile he wrote doggedly on, trying, by sheer force of will and endurance, to get the work done. But the pain had its way; it grew maddening, unendurable; and at last, with an exclamation of despair, Louis threw down his pen.

Leaving his desk and turning out the lamp, he dragged his lounging chair into the darkest corner of the room, behind the door, and sat there with closed eyes, holding his head in his hands. The evening was mild, and he had thrown the window wide open. A breeze stirred the leaves of the apple-tree and the laburnum, and floated into the room, touching his hot brow softly. From the dining-room, on the floor below, there came up to him the sound of laughter and merry voices. He listened for Beatrice's voice, but it was not

amongst them One of his cousins came to summon him to the evening meal, but he asked for coffee to be brought to him instead. Presently his pain lulled a little, but he sat on in the darkness, a prey to melancholy reflections, and after awhile fell fast asleep.

When he awoke the little room was brilliantly flooded with moonlight. The house was perfectly still. The whole household had long ago retired to bed, supposing Louis to have done the same. Through the open window came the long-drawn sighs of the wind-ruffled trees. The apple branches knocked at the window panes, the laburnum tassels swung and tossed in the air. Behind the great, slowly-swaying elm-tree the full moon, brightly silver now, and attended by one flashing golden star, was mounting serenely into the sky. By the height to which it had already ascended Louis knew he must have slept for many hours. The splendour of the sky-spectacle, and the charm of night, held him enchained. He remained in his chair watching and dreaming.

The door was pushed open, Louis heard nothing, but the subtle feeling of someone being near stole over him, and made him turn his head. Beatrice was in the room, at his desk!

He sat motionless, scarcely breathing. She had evidently not been to bed, for she still wore the dress she had had on all day. A white wrap was thrown about her shoulders. She put some sheets of paper down on the davenport, and then passed, in a tired way, out of the room again. As she did so her white shawl dropped unheeded to the floor. Louis noiselessly rose and looked out of the door after her. Enveloped in a flood of moonlight that streamed through a staircase window, she was slowly mounting the stairs towards her own room at the top of the house. When she had passed out of sight Louis turned back into his den, and looked at the papers she had left on his desk. In the bright moonlight it was easy to decipher the writing. It was apparently not Beatrice's handwriting, but his own. Before he had read many words the true explanation of the appearance both of the present and of the former mysterious manuscript was clear to his mind. Both had been the work of Beatrice, and Beatrice must have worked under the influence of a kind of hypnotic suggestion, unconsciously exerted by himself. The explanation afforded by the phenomenon of somnambulism had seemed wonderful enough, this was something far more so. But he had no doubt of its correctness. What he now held in his hand

was the end of the story. It covered only a few pages, and he ran through it swiftly. The climax was worked up in a masterly way, just as he had desired it to be, and the whole story, as it now stood, was as excellent as anything he had ever written. He was well enough acquainted with the subject of hypnotic suggestion to know that the influence was often exerted unconsciously. His own theory about it was that even in its most remarkable manifestations, whether deliberately or involuntarily produced, it was simply a marvellous development of the ordinary influence exerted by all human minds, in greater and less degrees, one over the other. He also knew, and here he recalled the remark Frank Morrison had made during his interview with him, that the exaltation of the natural faculties was one of its commonest effects. He saw how Beatrice's impressionable nature, her half-intellectual, half-emotional temperament, the influence he had had over her mind from childhood, her own literary talent, and her intense sympathy with him, had all helped to make the thing possible, explicable. Was it not more than probable too that some passion stronger than sympathy had been at work on Beatrice's side to make her receptivity so abnormal, his influence so potent? As this latter reflection occurred to him Louis's heart high. There was the detail of the imitation of his handwriting to be considered. That too might possibly have been accomplished under hypnotic influence, but it scarcely needed that explanation. Beatrice, in copying manuscripts for him, as she often did, had frequently imitated the writing, a natural resemblance of her own to his making it easy for her to do so.

There was a slight sound on the stairs, and glancing through the doorway, Louis saw that Beatrice was returning. He replaced the manuscript on the davenport, and sat down in his chair again. Beatrice re-entered the room, and looking on the floor as if in search of something, caught up the white wrap that had fallen there. She was just passing out of the door again, when with a sudden, impulsive movement, she turned back, went to the desk, and bending down, pressed her lips to it. At that the watcher's heart gave a great leap. That was certainly not an action prompted by cousinly affection, or mere intensity of sympathy! It was hard, after such a conclusive revelation, for Louis not to spring up, and claim her on the spot for his own, but the fear of alarming her held him back. Involuntarily, however, he drew in a deep breath, and in the quietude

Beatrice heard it. With a gesture of terror she threw her hands together, and looked round with startled eyes.

"Don't be frightened!" said Louis gently, getting up from his seat.

"Oh, it's you, Louis!" she cried.

Relief, vexation, shyness, and laughter mingled in the musical tones of her voice. "You have found me out then!" she said.

"Yes, I have found you out, Beatrice!" he repeated. "Found you out in more ways than one."

It was impossible to keep silence now: circumstances had been too strong. Beatrice dropped her eyes, and a smile curved her sweet mouth. She was not ashamed of the revelation she had made, for well as Louis had imagined he had kept his secret, Beatrice had long ago become intuitively conscious of it.

"How lovely the night is," she said, irrelevantly, as she lifted her eyes again, and looked out of the window.

Through the open window came the sound of the whispering of the trees in the moonlit air, branch bowing to branch, and twig turning to twig, with rustling murmurs pregnant with mystery, and with secrets of life and love. Above the great elm the silver moon and golden star steadfastly climbed together higher and higher into the open sky. Light clouds drifted across them, and they sparkled through; denser clouds gathered, floated across, and obscured them, then passed, and silver globe and golden star gleamed out more radiantly than before, and in still splendour continued to ascend together. Together, hand in hand, silent for awhile, Louis and Beatrice watched the sky pageant. Then they turned one to the other, eyes reading eyes, lips meeting lips, and the old story was once more softly told. Till Beatrice, suddenly awakening to a consciousness of the strangeness of the circumstances and the hour, whispered a quick good-night, and Louis, standing in his doorway, again watched her ascending the stairs in the stream of moonlight.

What Beatrice could tell Louis concerning the writing of the story confirmed him in his opinion that it had been done under the influence of hypnotic suggestion. She had written both times, she said, under an overmastering impulse, and with absolute spontaneousness. She had been quite conscious of what she was doing, and had felt amazed at the power of which she had become possessed. Each time she had experienced great physical and mental

fatigue after emerging from her absorption in her task. The influence had failed the first time before she had reached the end of the story, and the renewal of it had been necessary before she could finish it. She had made attempts at completing it on the strength of her own unaided talent, but had been quite unable to do so. After giving Louis, on the first occasion, the surprise of discovering the manuscript, she had intended disclosing to him the strange part she had played in its production, but when he imparted to her his idea that it was a somnambulistic feat of his own she determined, half in a spirit of humour, half from a sensitive feeling of reticence that took possession of her, not to reveal, at any rate for a time, the true solution of the mystery.

In due time the story appeared in the first number of the *English Magazine of Fiction*, under the joint names of Louis Weyman and Beatrice O'Brien. Little were any of its readers likely to imagine in how curious a way it had come to be written.

That time of struggle and difficulty has long since passed with Louis Weyman. The tide of his affairs turned, and led him on to restoration of health, to fame, and to fortune. He is now a prominent man of letters, and has in Beatrice a charming and inspiring wife. She still writes, with greatly-developed capacity, her own graceful stories, but has never repeated the feat of writing one of Louis's for him. Neither is she likely ever to do so, for it is scarcely probable that a stress of circumstances and of emotion similar to that which acted upon her before will ever occur again, and Louis Weyman has too enlightened a perception of the possible dangers attending the exertion of such a power as he possesses ever to make a voluntary use of it.

"Le Jeu ne vaut pas la Chandelle!"

'Tis sweet to look in a maiden's eyes,
And see the beauteous love lights rise,
And sweet it is when kiss meets kiss,
You would say Heaven held no greater bliss!
You could swear the maiden was all your own;
You could swear she loved but you alone.
But soon enough you'll know full well,

"Le Jeu ne vaut pas la Chandelle!"

For, go away for a little space,
And another lover takes your place!
His shall those passionate kisses be;
And the maid you loved so tenderly.
For the love of maids is light as wind;
And out of sight is out of mind!
Be wise in time, remember well,

"Le Jeu ne vaut pas la Chandelle!"

And it's sweet sometimes to dream of a wife,
To love and to cherish for all her life;
To walk by your side and you by hers,
Adown the path of the coming years.
But remember with every month that flies,
Your passion each for the other dies.
So stop at dreaming, for mark you well,

"Le Jeu ne vaut pas la Chandelle!"

SYDNEY G. SIMPSON.

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON reaching the hall the old clock on the mantelpiece striking six as she passed, Henrietta made an unexpected discovery. Mrs. Godwin had evidently mistaken the time by a whole hour, or else Sophie had brought the cup of chocolate earlier than usual, knowing that luncheon had been an informal meal; and thinking that an extra rest would surely be a good thing for her mistress after all the fatigue of the wedding. The probability of this proceeding flashed upon Henrietta and then she smiled, for under the clock stood Bel-lissima with wagging tail, and eyes that said more plainly than speech. Come out into the garden. Gathering her long skirt in one hand and a holland rug in the other the girl, nothing loth, set off for her favourite part of the grounds, the old walled-in enclosure at the back of the house. But upon turning the corner of the lawn she came unexpectedly upon Paul, who was sitting on a bench immediately below Mrs. Godwin's window, splicing the handle of a bat. His presence temporarily checked her desire to go on into the back garden. She looked at him wistfully, and coming to his side, slipped her hand into his.

Neither of them knew that, taking her usual siesta on the sofa in the dressing-room window, Mrs. Godwin happened to look down at this moment into the garden beneath. She had a novel in her hand, and was about to doze comfortably amidst a pile of cushions: but now, even as she looked, her air of sleepy indifference changed suddenly to one of attention, and she gazed at Paul as if waking up to his attitude in a new light. Unfortunately the two below were utterly unconscious of the pair of eyes above them. Paul guessed that the wedding which had gone off so happily for one sister, had tried the other's composure sorely. The separation between the two would last till next spring, for the bride and bridegroom instead of returning to Godwin's Rest after their short honeymoon in

Ireland, would start in little more than a fortnight for Malta. Paul judged rightly that Henrietta would rather have stayed at home this evening, and that she had come out here to be quiet. While they stood facing each other her glance wandered off to the delicate lights falling across the tree branches, and to the red lurid clouds that were gathering themselves up from the south-west.

"We are going to have a storm to night," she said presently. "I was so hot this afternoon that I went up to the field under the beeches to get some air before tea."

"I looked for you after lunch," he said, "but I couldn't find you anywhere."

"I wanted to be away from everyone. I tried to divert my mind by watching the bumble bees," she said, in a dreamy voice, "they were so busy and happy. I sat down on that old plank in the grass, and the wild mint was all against my face, it is so tall this year. I think the bees were half intoxicated, most of them, just with the pleasure of living; golden, red banded, and amber tailed beauties—and so sleepy. I had two on my finger, and they waved their front legs in a feeble, please-don't-tease-us sort of way. They are such contented 'yellow breeched philosophers.' It was so pleasant up there Paul. Two brown velvet weasels were flying about in the ditch, they didn't see me: and a peacock butterfly perched on my dress part of the time, and a pair of bullfinches were in the hedge, and a lark sang high up, and it made me feel," she ended, "as if no words, only music, could ever paint it all."

"It is beautiful everywhere to-day," Paul said. "I don't know when I have seen the garden more lovely than it is this week. It's a beautiful world."

"Yes," she said, "I have felt that all my life, and if I cannot some day render it and share it with other people, it will kill me."

"You are a strange child," he said, in some wonder. "What is it that you want, Princess?"

She looked at him again with a touch of dumb anguish in her eyes. "Ah," she said, "if I knew *that*." For a moment she hesitated, then went on more passionately. "When I was made, Paul, there was something left out of me: there is a bit of my soul missing. I shall never be complete or any comfort to others if I cannot find it. It is the link that should unite me to other people. To learn to give in the right way—that is what I have not learnt

yet. I daresay the fault is in myself. Who is it says the instinct of the universe is social and those who live alone are neither truly happy nor truly good. That everyone should leave some trace of themselves behind them, and accomplish their mission." She paused a moment and then went on again with an expressive gesture that revealed even more than her words. "Perhaps you don't understand. You love all this and so do I: the garden, the sky, the flowers: but your love is different. You and Ted are alike. You delight in nature without one spark of anything but pleasure, with no desire of personal expression. Wordsworth speaks for you and so do all poets. I—it has throbbed through me ever since I was a child, I am not content. To see it all, to feel it all so intensely, to express it in music, and yet to be denied the power to share it—that is agony. I ought not to be ungrateful. I can sometimes play out my thoughts, but I only play them alone. If I could only share them, instead of merely satisfying myself. Who is it speaks of "*la tête remplie de melodie mais le cœur parfaitement vide?*" Such music is not enough. Sometimes nature rests me; but there are days when she rouses me like a trumpet call to action. And then I am miserable. I tell you Paul there are days when I stand by the trees, and the water, and note everything, that it all rushes over me in music as if an angel had whispered a message, and I had failed to deliver it. Nature is very cruel to me then: she takes me close to her heart and speaks to me, but she never lets me speak to anyone else."

Paul drew nearer, laying his hand over hers. She seemed so moved that he could hardly answer her at first. There were depths in her nature which few people could have fathomed. Yet strangely enough his eyes, full of pity and tenderness, refused to meet the wistful ones opposite him, but were fixed on the ground. He longed to speak; but some underlying consciousness, some power of self-restraint held him as if in a vice. And the first words that rushed to his lips remained unuttered. The strength that went out of him when he spoke at last in his usual quiet voice seemed to be a part of his very life.

"I am a dull fellow, Princess," he said. "I am afraid that I don't quite understand you."

With a little involuntary gesture, Henrietta drew her hand away, looking up at him with eyes that betrayed no reproach, only a

pathetic weariness, a touch of doubt : but while her hesitation still trembled between speech and silence, the sudden sharp tapping of fingers on a pane of glass made Paul start, and attracted his instant attention. A window was thrown open above, and Mrs. Godwin's voice said, "Paul I want you." Henrietta turned away then and disappeared in the direction of the orchard. Richter says well that there are so many tender and holy emotions flying about in the soul, never to be stamped by the body of an outward act. The hour had gone by never to be recalled, and Paul left to himself entered the house with a curious sense of apprehension stealing over him. It is one of the strangest mysteries in this life that a chance word, a forgotten look may lay the train for a moral shipwreck, stranger still that the after consequences of such an error appear to be a thousand times greater than the error itself. But Paul had learnt a lesson which the length of a lifetime can hardly teach some people : he had learnt to hold his tongue. He could never rid himself of that Obermann-like subtle, second sense, which pursues words and actions through all the paths of possible consequences. Mrs. Godwin was still reclining on the sofa. Upon his entrance she held out a telegram to him saying—"this came just now, Paul, from La Navette. I opened it by mistake : it was brought to me, and only marked Godwin, but it is evidently meant for your father."

Paul held out his hand mechanically and ran his eye over the message. It only contained three words : but he changed colour as he read them. As the shadow of something before us, or as one of those indescribably painful dreams belonging only to some kinds of weakness or to some phase of a recurrent and severe illness, the telegram lay in his hand, bringing back the ghost of the past, the remembrance of one terrible figure seen ten years ago at La Navette. Surely the sun had gone in, and the day had turned dull and cold. He shivered as he stood, and all the time he felt conscious of his aunt's eyes watching him.

"I must find my father," he said at last, when the silence had become oppressive. "One of us must go to La Navette."

She continued to look at him with some curiosity. Men don't usually cry out when they get bad news, and his face expressed very little : it seldom served as a good index to his feelings. "It's a merciful release," she said, "very merciful for everybody. He has lingered many years longer than one would have expected. I suppose it will make some difference to your prospects."

"I have never thought about that," said Paul.

Mrs. Godwin resented this remark. She took it as an implied reproach: as if she had not meant to say the proper thing. But then Paul had a way of making her feel uncomfortable. She never believed that his speeches were as innocent as his face.

"I can't see the good of either of you going to La Navette," she said. "A letter of condolence is all that can be expected surely, and I am certain that your father will not approve of your taking such a journey in any case, Paul."

"He approves of my going next week," said Paul. "We settled that long ago. Now that we know that my grandmother is in trouble, a few days earlier or later will make no difference in the end to us, and it may be a comfort to her. Do you know where my father is?"

"He has gone to the Grange to see your Aunt Catherine, Paul; he ought to be back before long."

Paul pulled out his watch. There would be plenty of time to catch the Southampton boat, he reflected, even if he went first to meet his father. He turned as if to go, then paused and said, "I shall be back by the end of the week, most likely, Aunt Laura. Henrietta will not know, and perhaps she need not even be told that I have gone to La Navette; it might worry her, and I don't want to spoil her evening at the Grange."

This suggestion had the effect of an irritant upon Mrs. Godwin's temper—already in an uncertain condition. Paul had set her advice aside to begin with, as if he had scarcely heard her, and now he was making his own movements a matter of importance to Henrietta.

"I will say good-bye for you," she said. "Henrietta will probably have started already, but really you make matters very awkward for me sometimes."

To this speech Paul made no answer, and his silence increased her irritation. "I suppose you will stay for the funeral," she said.

"Yes, I shall stay," he said. "I am the last of the De Follets."

"That was a favourite assertion of your grandfather's at one time, Paul."

"Is it generous to remind me of what I can never forget?" said Paul in a low voice.

Mrs. Godwin began drumming on the pane with her fingers. "I beg your pardon, Paul; you have no need to be touchy. From

Henrietta's manner the other day, I wondered if you had said anything to her about your mother's family."

Paul started. "No, never! What do you mean?"

Mrs. Godwin would not meet the look turned upon her, but gazed at the distant flower-beds. "Well," she said, "Henrietta has always been like a sister to you; I thought, perhaps, that you might have no secrets from her, but, of course, I cannot be expected to understand any reasons that you may have for silence."

"What reasons should I have?" he said. "If it were not for my father, everyone might have known the truth from the first. You know how he has suffered; it is surely natural that we should be silent." The smothered pain in his heart rang out now fiercely in his whole voice.

Mrs. Godwin drew away from him. "My dear Paul, I did not mean to say anything to upset you; pray don't be so violent, you frighten me."

A change came over Paul; the fire died out of his eyes. "There is no need for you to be frightened, Aunt Laura," he said, dully. "You know you can always say anything you like to me, only don't trouble my father with raking up old wounds, it can do no good."

Mrs. Godwin removed her gaze from the flower-beds and looked up at him; her whole attitude expressed a sense of injury. She had made up her mind to say a certain unpleasant thing during the last few minutes, and Paul was not helping her in the least; indeed, it really seemed as if no suspicion of her purpose had yet dawned upon his obtuseness. "I don't think you understand," she said at last. "It is not your father I was thinking of, but of Henrietta and of myself. I had almost to prevaricate to her the other day, and deceit of any kind is so painful to me. She will be puzzled now why you, and perhaps your father, will be rushing off in such a hurry, and really, as I said before, it will be very awkward. Don't you think it would be more comfortable if she knew the whole truth? It is merely a family matter, and your father has never said that he wished it kept from her, only from outsiders. She is quite old enough——" The sentence was never finished. Like an ignorant child who has applied a lighted torch to a train of gunpowder, and is alarmed at the result, Mrs. Godwin came to a sudden startled pause.

No reproach rose to Paul's lips. He turned and looked at her—

such a look may be seen sometimes in the eyes of a wounded, helpless creature, caught unawares, watching the approach of a final destruction—unfairly trapped to death. For a few minutes there lingered in the room one of those terrible silences far more overpowering than spoken words, then Paul said, "I should have thought, at least, that you might have *trusted me*."

A slight flush rose to Mrs. Godwin's cheek. "Of course," she said, querulously. "You have no right to treat my suggestions in such a rude manner."

To this accusation Paul made no answer—he did not even hear it, but stood looking before him with eyes that saw nothing. When at last he spoke, his voice, though low, sounded so fierce that Mrs. Godwin involuntarily shrank back against her pillows, conscious of real alarm. "Tell her everything—everything you like," he said; then the door closed behind him, and she heard his step go down the stairs at a run.

Left alone, she looked round nervously, and drew a long breath of relief. Had he suspected her real motive through the flimsy veil of excuse that she had thrown over it? His manner had startled and upset her, and for a few minutes after his departure she lay smelling at her salts bottle, uncomfortably conscious of the rapid beating of her heart. He had not the manners to say good-bye, she thought, but I must make allowances. I was getting afraid for him—not for her. She has always looked upon him as a brother, and always will; I can see that. I notice that she colours up whenever Ted makes his appearance; but she is absurdly tender-hearted, and I can't have her attention given to Paul's vagaries till her own engagement is a settled thing. If I have to tell her the truth about Paul's family, she will probably shrink from him as much as I do, and he knows it. Poor fellow, it is sad for him, very.

Her own thoughts, accompanied by some underlying knowledge, had reached the complacent stage by this time. The fancy that everyone was likely to fall in love with her beautiful daughter had presented itself to her mind more than once lately as a pleasing idea.

For a refinement of cruelty, commend me to a thoroughly selfish woman: no juggernaut car can ever find a better driver. In this instance, so long as Henrietta followed the path marked out for her, the number of victims who fell beneath the wheels of her triumphal progress would but serve to flatter the pride of the driver. Mrs. Godwin,

comfortably established in the seat of maternal authority, flattered herself that she had a firm hold on the reins of Henrietta's chariot. She had never approved of Paul, possibly because his voice and expression often reminded her of her dead husband, whose boyish extravagance she had first encouraged, and then pointed to remorse. We never feel at ease with those we have injured, and possibly Paul stirred in her heart some faint crippled sense of self-reproach, reproach well nigh smothered by the dust of years and by those closely-drawn mental blinds which keep so many souls in the dark, and more often than not serve finally as a shroud. Paul was generally very polite to her, but she could never make out what his politeness covered. Some people have this gift of suggestiveness, often, unconsciously, they raise in us the ghost of past hopes, or show us in their own lives the ideal we have abandoned, and this very quality in Paul at times took Mrs. Godwin unexpectedly aback. He was the only person in her little home kingdom whose measure refused to be stretched or shortened to her own satisfaction. She said to herself more than once this evening that it was a pity he should so completely have lost his temper, even if he had misunderstood her meaning. Possibly he had needed no check, and it might be better to say nothing to Henrietta for a little while longer. For more than one reason she hesitated to speak, but at all times such hesitation as hers is a poor safeguard.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHILE Mrs. Godwin built castles and dozed upon the sofa, Henrietta, left alone, had taken her way with "loitering steps and slow" to her favourite seat in the old orchard—the projecting angle of the wall,—where rough, step-like ledges had been fashioned in the brick-work—ledges long ago carpeted and overgrown with moss.

The orchard lay in a tiny hollow, and must at one time have been deeply dug out; legend asserting that the ancient monks had here made their fish pond. On the other side of the wall the ground stood higher, and a mass of chalky deposit, overgrown with sparse grass, formed a long, barrow-like ridge. Anyone coming down the field could easily rest their arms on the top of the wall, or, with but slight exertion, climb over it; but inside, Henrietta, leaning against

the brickwork, could count three or four steps above her head, and as many below her feet.

Looking from her niche with dreamy eyes the whole familiar place lay before her this evening like a garden in a vision. The day had been intensely hot, a blue haze trembled over the fields, and on the far horizon one or two thunder clouds were beginning to make their appearance. But the borders on either side the grassy path lay in grateful shadow under the wall, and were full of summer flowers. Deep violet and ivory tinted iris raised their branching heads, touched with strange lettered pencillings—the feathered reflections may be of some passing angel wings. Behind them purple columbines, poised themselves dove-like on their polished stalks; and white fringed pinks, foot-wide in snow, lay in front, overhanging the pathway. Celestial roses stretched their shy branches against a honeysuckle hedge in full bloom; and in a shower of fairy gold, loosened by the wind, the last shell-curved leaves of the yellow briers fell on the sunlit grass. The scent of the flowers hovered in the air in an impalpable cloud. Joubert tells us such odours are their souls, and surely, since the days of Eden, the summer wind—felt but unseen, that sweet-breathing, mysterious presence, moving spirit-like through the twilight—bears forever on its wings, garnered fragrance from every garden in the world. Through all the fair pageant had come Henrietta “moving slow”—a slender figure, with down drooped head, and hands hanging loose at her side, herself the fairest thing in the old garden. The light breeze played round her, lifting the rings of her hair, touching her cheek with its fingers, and making low music of its own in a vain effort to attract her attention. Bellissima, a faithful shadow, after once seeing his mistress seated had stretched himself contentedly at her feet. Henrietta stooped and patted his head, and the dog waited for her to speak, more patiently than most people would have done. During her solitary rambles she often talked to him, and as a child had found in him an excellent confidant. He never interrupted her, and the expectant, rhythmic beating of his tail could only be interpreted as a prelude to a subdued accompaniment: while his liquid eyes always showed unflagging and affectionate attention. With her chin resting in her hand, and both elbows on her knee the girl began presently to speak: the sound of her voice low and soft as the lowest whisper of the summer wind. “Once upon a time,

Bellissima," she said, "there lived a Princess: the most petted Princess in the world, and the happiest. She grew up in a kingdom where the sun always shone, and the wind and the trees and the flowers all talked to her. Her kingdom was so beautiful that one half of its wonders could never be explored. But as the years passed by she grew tall enough at last to look over a great hedge that ran round one end of the palace gardens, and then a terrible thing happened. Down below, far, far away she saw another strange kingdom outside her own. On the air rose the smoke of a great battle; and three sad spirits called Sorrow, Want, and Care sat under the hedge, and took toll of the passers by. Many people weary and wounded, came along, and the Princess looked down at them with a heart full of pity. She could not get out of the garden, so she threw flowers and treasures and kind words over the hedge; but alas the people did not understand her language, and had no use for the treasures of her world. For over the Princess lay this spell; that to share her realm with anyone else would maybe break her heart, and theirs too: thus the fairies had prevented her learning the language of the people outside. And in all the years that went by only one man had spoken a word that the Princess could understand, and that one word cut deep into her heart. As he passed by he looked up, and she looked down, and over the wall through the sunshine he tossed a curse: while ever behind him trailed a terrible shadow, black in the dust.

Then in despair the Princess sought her brother, the wise Prince. "Give me another heart," she cried, "a heart that can love and be loved outside my palace. With all my treasure I have so much and they so little, no wonder they curse me. In my life there have been no shadows, but on the hard road out there everyone's shadow lies black; and now that I look more carefully I can see a sad spirit in my palace creeping everywhere. Those who go in and out know that other tongue, and the shadow of the outside world follows them in, yet none may mention it: *that* is a forbidden thing. So give me, brother, one of your philtres, and take from me if need be all my youth. Make me old and wise; for the youth of such a Princess as I am is a selfish, useless thing, and my kingdom of joy seems to be of no comfort to that other outside; the kingdom of want and sorrow."

But the Prince only looked at her perplexedly and shook his

head, so the Princess wandered away by herself. But one day Bellissima—the girl's dreamy voice sank lower, and her thoughts went so deep that she forgot she was thinking aloud; "One day, there came by a great Prince, who lived in another kingdom; a Prince who seemed able to understand her language. Too frightened to tell him her heart she yet wished, oh so often, like that other Princess in the fairy tale, for a little hole in the wall where she could whisper all her perplexity; and read aright the spell that lay upon her; and find out if the Prince who set her free would make shipwreck of his own life. The queen mother who loved her dearly, feared this disaster, but the Prince's eyes were blinded. He wanted to take possession of her kingdom: he believed it to be of great value. So it was to the Princess, because she was a fairy, and fairy gold to her was very precious; but in the hands of mortals it often changes to withered worthless leaves, and all mortals were dear to the Princess."

But here the soft voice faltered suddenly to a pause, for Bellissima began to show signs of restlessness, and the girl moved by the subtle consciousness that another presence sometimes brings, turned her head to see Ted behind her, leaning his arms on the top of the wall with the air of a person well contented with his position. He had purposely preceded Evelyn this evening. He knew well enough that the brougham would not follow him for another half hour, and Jeremiah upon interrogation had directed his steps to the orchard.

Uttering no formal greeting he stood looking down at Henrietta with a smile, and when he presently spoke his voice was as gentle as her own.

"You have not finished the story," he said. "You have misread the charm that rested upon the Princess. Her kingdom was the fairest in the world, but the spell which lay over it hid this knowledge from her; and would hide it, till some Prince came by to whom she could give her trust. She would know him well enough without speech, for he carried a talisman with one word upon it, the perfect word of all words to cast out her fear. But the story cannot be finished outside. May I come over the wall, Hetty?"

But Henrietta could make no answer. The strong personality behind the quiet manner seemed to be drawing her glance irresistably upwards. She had wished for the Prince, and lo, in granting

her desire the fates had brought in their train, confusion. Recalling her own unconscious confession, she turned very pale, and starting from her seat stood trembling like some shy bird of the woods. The great angel of the summer came near unseen with wings dyed in flower-petals, and fingers drawing the roses open. From the river came her laugh, and her sigh of content trembled in the note of the wood pigeon: the aspen felt her shiver, and her smile lay in the sunlight. A glamour rested on the garden and the world shaped itself anew. In another moment Ted swung himself over the wall and dropped at Henrietta's side. "Have I frightened you," he said. "I could not bear to do that, Hetty, darling, forgive me. The world is all a fairy tale this evening. I have always loved you. Don't you know it?"

Her answer came to him now like a cry of distress: "Oh, Ted, you don't know me: you don't know what you ask."

"I think I do," he said, slowly. "You have always been my Rachel. Does it seem to you that I am asking too much?"

"Ah, Ted," she said, under her breath, "I am not like other girls. I seem to have grown up in a world by myself, no one has ever had the key. That is the reason why I am more afraid of you sometimes than of anyone else"—the honest eyes drooped still lower, and the girlish voice faltered—"because I believe that some day you may be disappointed, and sometimes I feel as if I were born to be alone."

"You shall never be lonely again," he said, tenderly. Standing there outwardly quiet, but within full of fierce indignation for the system of continual censure which had shadowed the pure life before him with self distrust.

"It would not frighten me beforehand. If I had never known anything else," she said, simply, "but afterwards, I think afterwards, if I felt some day that I had hurt you, I could not bear it. I ought to be older and wiser." As she stood before him unconsciously revealing her own heart, the scent of the flowers rising round her, and her face showing delicately as another flower, like a dream of the coming twilight: with her colour deepening and fading, and the new timidity in her voice: talking in all her innocent untouched loveliness of age and disappointment—there stirred in the heart of the man at her side such a passion of love and tenderness, that his self control would have vanished, had he not feared to startle her confidence, to frighten her shy confession to silence.

"The least sound of your voice, the touch of your hand; the mere thought that you are near me, that you do not wish me away—a man might count the world well lost for that," he said at last, in his quiet voice. Insensibly she drew a step nearer to him.

"Can I make you as happy as all that?" she asked, wistfully. "Oh, Ted, I believe you understand me better than I understand myself. I seem to have no will of my own left; only yours. Is it fair to you. Is it right?" To such a questioner few men could have been expected to give a reasonable answer; yet strangely enough Ted realized that any possible loss or wrong lay in exactly the opposite direction to which Henrietta would have assigned it; that the responsibility rested not with her, but with himself, twelve years her senior. He looked at her now without a word, but no passionate protestation could have answered her question half so convincingly. The bright colour sprang suddenly to her cheek; she turned and with a gesture of shy confidence laid both her hands in his.

"It is not that I want you to go away: not that," she whispered. "But if I were to bring pain and disappointment into your life some day, what then?"

"You could not do it, not if you tried for ever," he said, tenderly, drawing her back to her former resting place, and sitting down on the ledge at her side. "Pain and disappointment in the future! my Princess can you guess what it would have cost me to let you go now?"

(To be continued.)

A Song of the Fishing Fleet.

*Haul out! Haul out to the fishing,
Through the starshine and the rain,
No holds are filled for the wishing,
Haul back to the sea again!*

O, the brave they may follow the bugles, yet come to their end in peace,
And the farmer may toil at the ploughing, ere death shall his labours
cease;

We strive through the mirk and the twilight, and none may rest
from the war,

Though hearts are heavy with sorrow when the boats sail over the bar.

For the man must go to the fishing, tho' the tall waves roar in the bay.
And the wife she must bide at the spinning, and weep through the
weary day.

Till the bitter struggle is over, and he dies past the sound of her moans,
And the long weeds tangle his body, and the great tides tumble
his bones.

*Haul out! Haul out to the fishing,
Through the starshine and the rain;
Griefs may not cease for the wishing,
Haul back to the sea again.*

We have gotten our bread from the waters, and we pay the gift with
a fee,

The lives that we hold the dearest, for that is the toll of the sea;
I have given the sons of my body and theirs was the better part,
Wi' Peter it took my pleasure, but wi' Patsey it broke my heart.

And now though my strength is withered, and the black years weight
me sore,

I must beat my lone through the breakers and tug at the straining oar,
And the strong winds may not harm me, for the sea will have
naught but gold,

I shall lie at last with the women and rot in the graveyard's mould.

*Haul out! Haul out to the fishing,
Through the starshine and the rain;
Fair death may not be for the wishing,
Haul back to the sea again.*

J. WINDER GOOD.